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Tamil Times
commences its
25th year
of continuous
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Joseph Pararajasingham, MP and wife Sugunam - shot on X-Mas Day (top left);
Eric Solheim to visit Sri Lanka (top right);
Women Tamil Tigers engaged in sharpshooting competition (below)





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- Voltaire



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A heinous murder amidst escalating violence

It is a murder heinous in the extreme. Senior parliamentarian Joseph Pararajasingham and his wife were among the congregation that had gathered on Christmas Eve within St. Mary's Cathedral in Batticaloa in eastern Sri Lanka. It was the holiest night of their faith. Bishop Kingsley Swamplai had concluded celebrating Christmas Mass. Pararajasingham had just received Holy Communion and returning to his seat when gunmen who had smuggled themselves into the church and mingled with unsuspecting worshipers struck. Pararajasingham was shot several times and he dropped dead on the spot. His wife and several others received serious gunshot injuries.

The sheer barbarity of this outrageous killing is demonstrated by the occasion, the place and the manner in which it was carried out. What can one say about the mindset of these killers? They and their type have no compunction in killing even in places of worship such as churches, temples or mosques. They kill parents in front of their children. They kill sons and daughters in the presence of their parents. They kill husbands and wives both together or in the presence of each other. What one can say is that the manner in which Pararajasingham was killed reflects the new depths to which these killers and their type have sunk and the depraved nature of the gun culture that has characterised Tamil politics over the last two decades and more.

Tragically, the murder of Pararajasingham has occurred in the context of an escalation of violent incidents throughout the North and east of the country. War drums are being beaten, the sounds of which becoming more deafening as each day passes. More than 140 persons - soldiers, sailors, policemen, Tamil Tigers and civilians - have been killed in the past eight weeks in the northeast.

With ever increasing number of claymore mine and grenade attacks blamed on the Tamil Tigers and retaliatory attacks by the security forces, there is universal fear among the people, especially among those living in the Northeast, that what is happening at present is only a prelude to an outbreak of total war.

The Tamil Tigers have denied responsibility for the string of attacks on the security forces, including maritime attacks on the Sri Lankan Navy, and they have claimed that the attacks are being carried out by "an enraged" people against the harassment and excesses committed by an "occupying force". This claim by the Tigers would appear to have pitted the ordinary people in direct confrontation with the security forces and thereby they have become more vulnerable.

Already, the adverse effects of the escalation of violent incidents are self evident. Even as the attacks on the security forces are mounting, they have begun to hit back with frequent cordon and search operations and round-ups reportedly for purposes of 'interrogation'. According to local sources, frightened by the prospect of being blown up by a hand grenade or being gunned down by a sniper, members of the security forces are behaving highhandedly taking away by force mobile phones and cameras from students. There have also been many instances where innocent civilians have been assaulted or taken into

custody on mere suspicion. It is said that people are not comfortable even inside their homes due to search operations.

There have also been many reported instances of arbitrary killing of civilians and several cases of "disappearances". The worst excess hitherto carried out on 2 January by the security forces was the extrajudicial killing of five students of Koneswara College in Trincomalee. In this case, the military first claimed that the victims died as a result of a bomb in their possession exploding accidentally. But later the Judicial Medical Officer's report revealed that they had died as a result of gunshot injuries.

The streets of Jaffna are already said to resemble a war-zone. Military checkpoints are mushrooming everywhere. Ordinary people do not normally venture out choosing to remain indoors for fear of being arrested on suspicion or being caught in the cross-fire in clashes between the Tigers and the army. The army-people bonhomie which was much in evidence during the last three years of the ceasefire appears to have disappeared fast. Shops are closed by 4 pm. The thousands of Tamils who normally travel each day between northern Jaffna and Colombo have ceased to do so.

Though the overwhelming majority of the approximately 6,000 students of the Jaffna University are said to be opposed, it is learnt that there is a concerted effort to shut it to enable the students to participate in the coming "final war".

There have also been reports that thousands of families have abandoned their homes from certain areas of Jaffna and fled southwards into the Vanni to avoid being caught up in a full scale war that might breakout anytime. For the first time in many years, about forty families have sought refuge in Tamil Nadu, according to reports from Chennai.

There is supposed to be an extant ceasefire to which both parties profess adherence, but its provisions are being routinely violated in the most flagrant manner. There is the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) to supervise and monitor compliance with the ceasefire. But the findings, pleas, condemnations and warnings from the monitors have been callously disregarded. The conduct of the parties has left the monitors in an impossible situation in the context of the rising tide of violent incidents and attacks. The SLMM was forced to temporarily suspend its operational activities in the Jaffna peninsula for several days following violent scenes near its office during a recent demonstration by 'students' when an attempt at forced entry into its offices was made. Then there was the grenade attack on the SLMM's offices in

Batticaloa resulting in severe damage to four of its vehicles. The latest is that the SLMM has suspended its activities and pulled out its personnel from Trincomalee which of late has become the centre of a spate of violent incidents involving the Tamil Tigers and the military.

The LTTE leader in his Hero Day speech on 27 November last year announced that the Tigers would intensify their struggle for liberation in 2006. But he qualified it by describing the newly elected President, Mahinda Rajapakse, as a pragmatist and a practical politician and therefore he was prepared to give some time for him to come up with a proposal that would satisfy Tamil aspirations. As for the President, he has summoned all political parties with a view to adopt a 'consensus' on the ethnic issue. But such an effort in the polarised context of Sri Lankan politics is bound to take time.

The latest information is that an all-party meeting convened by the President has unanimously decided that steps should be taken to resume "immediate talks" between the Government and the LTTE. Key political leaders including Ranil Wickremesinghe, Leader of Opposition and former Prime Minister; Somawansa Amarasinghe, leader of Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna; G.L. Peiris, former chief negotiator; and leaders from other political parties participated in the meeting. That the leader of the JVP was present at this meeting and agreed to resumption talks with the LTTE is not without significance.

The unanimous view of the international community supporting the Sri Lankan peace process is that a return to war would be a disaster for the island and its people, and that the LTTE and the Government should resume direct talks, first on the operation of the Ceasefire Agreement as previously agreed between the parties. But the talks have not yet taken place because of the dispute over the venue for the talks.

Maligned by many and even reviled by some in Sri Lanka for his alleged partiality towards the LTTE, this time round Eric Solheim's visit to Sri Lanka later this month is awaited with much anticipation as if he is the only one who holds the answer to the question whether it is going to be war or peace in the island. One hopes that Mr Solheim will use all his diplomatic and negotiating skills to bring back both the parties from the brink of the impending disaster of a return to a full blown war with all its consequential horror. But, this is a question to which only the belligerent parties can provide the answer by their commitment to peace through negotiations and the rejection of war as an available option.

Solheim's visit, much awaited

Jan 16 – Much significance is being attached to the forthcoming visit to Sri Lanka of Erik Solheim who is due in Sri Lanka on January 23 to move forward the peace process, according to a Norwegian press release.

The press release quotes him as saying: "I am deeply concerned about the recent increase in violence in Sri Lanka," said Mr Solheim. "In order to keep the violence from escalating further, it is urgent to get the two parties to sit down together to discuss how to ensure that the ceasefire agreement is observed and how the peace process can be advanced."

It is reported that Anton Balasingham, the LTTE's chief negotiator who resides in the UK will also arrive in Colombo at the same time as Solheim's arrival and will be flown by military helicopter to Kilinochchi. Arrangements have been made to fly him to Vanni in a helicopter accompanied by a diplomat from the Norwegian Embassy and two others - one from the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission and the other from the Sri Lanka Peace Secretariat.

Erik Solheim is scheduled to meet the Foreign Minister first on 23 January. This meeting will be followed by a meeting with the President Mahinda Rajapakse. After that he expected to go to Kilinochchi on 25 January where he will meet the LTTE leaders. Whether he will be able to meet the LTTE leader, Mr V Prabhakaran, is not clear. However, it is said that during his talks with Mr Balasingham, Solheim has insisted that he wants to meet Mr Prabhakaran himself. If both meet, the Norwegian envoy is bound to convey to him the views of Norway, and the Co-Chairs of Donor countries that the LTTE should halt its present wave of attacks on security forces and comply with a CFA until direct talks between the Government and the LTTE can be restarted. If the LTTE leader is minded to continue with the attacks and 'intensify the struggle' as he promised in his Annual Statement last November, he might decide to avoid meeting Mr Solheim.

That the LTTE has continued with its campaign of increasing attacks on security forces even after a recent terse warning from the US Ambassador in Colombo indicates that the Tigers are not inclined to deviate from their chosen course because of the warnings from the international community. The LTTE's intelligence chief, Pottu Amman, is already on record as saying that the international community had abandoned the Tamils, thus indicating that the Tamils would have to carry on fighting regardless of the attitude of the international community.

The question that is uppermost in many peoples' mind is whether Solheim by his visit and discussions in Colombo and Kilinochchi can produce an outcome that will effectively arrest the current spate of violence that is engulfing the northeast and threatening to move to other areas.

Special peace envoy Erik Solheim, who is now Minister for International Development in the new Norwegian government is to appoint a new peace envoy after consulting the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE during his visit to Sri Lanka this month, but he vowed to play a key role in the country's peace process.

Regarding the current situation, Mr Solheim said, "My message to the parties is clear. The Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE have the responsibility to safeguard the Ceasefire Agreement. The two parties must meet urgently to discuss

NEWS REVIEW

ways and means to strengthen the implementation of the Agreement. The ceasefire must be upheld to prevent further escalation of

violence. The government and the LTTE should put aside the issue on the venue and meet face to face as soon as possible," he said.

Mr. Solheim warned that the escalation of violence in the country and the tragic loss of life is placing the Ceasefire Agreement at risk, and if not contained would seriously hamper further progress in the peace process.

"I am deeply concerned about the recent rise in violence in Sri Lanka. My New Year resolution is that the parties put aside the discussion on venue so that they can meet to secure the CFA. There is no time to lose in my view. This will be the first step to advance the peace process after too much time with standstill," he said.

Asked if Olso was prepared to host the talks if the Government gave in to the demands of the LTTE for the first round to be held in Norway, Mr. Solheim said "as the third party facilitator to the peace process in Sri Lanka, Norway stressed that the focus should be on stopping the bloodshed and preventing further loss of life. Norway has maintained from the outset that the paramount thing is that the talks are held. The parties should stop the discussion on venue. Norway will be ready to facilitate talks between the parties wherever they agree to meet. Even on the moon for that matter. The venue for a meeting is of no importance to Norway. What is important is that the parties meet as soon as possible to discuss the CFA and the recent tragic and dangerous developments".

Nordic countries condemn attack on SLMM

Jan 17 - Four vehicles parked in front of the SLMM office were damaged in the explosion. Batticaloa office of the SLMM is located on Lake Road, 50 meters from the paramilitary Razeek Group camp, which is attached to a Sri Lanka Army camp. The area, a high security zone of the SLA, also houses other paramilitary camps and ex-militant offices of EPRLF (Varathar faction), PLOTE and EPDP.

A press release from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo, issued on 17 January said, "The contributing countries to Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, condemn in the strongest terms the unacceptable attack on the Batticaloa district office of SLMM on Friday 13 January. "Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission is an impartial, civilian mission that monitors the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement by the Sri Lankan Government and LTTE, at the invitation of the parties to the Agreement. SLMM has always enjoyed the full confidence of the affected populations, and good cooperation on behalf of the parties to the Ceasefire Agreement. The contributing countries expect the parties to the Ceasefire Agreement to ensure the security of SLMM, in accordance with the Agreement, and to ensure that SLMM is given the opportunity to fulfil the responsibilities placed on the mission by the parties to the Ceasefire Agreement. "Explosives detonated under a vehicle belonging to SLMM on the premises of the SLMM's district office in Batticaloa caused serious damage to four vehicles. No one was physically injured in the attack".

SLMM suspends operations in Trinco

Jan 17 - Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) announced on Tuesday (17) that they were suspending operations in the restive eastern port city of Trincomalee, hours after suspected Tamil Tigers ambushed a bus carrying Navy personnel, wounding 12 sailors and sparking a gun battle with the security forces that killed at least two civilians. The Monitors closed their office in Trincomalee until further notice, and their day to day activities in Trincomalee district will remain suspended until the office reopens, officials said. Recent spate of killings and a number of attacks including exchange of fire with the danger of innocent travellers getting caught in crossfire, make it difficult for the truce monitors to move around in the district, they said.

SLMM Head and other members attached to the Trincomalee office will remain in their hotel, which is located in Nilaveli, about sixteen km north of east port town. They can be contacted in their hotel, SLMM sources said. The Scandinavian monitors have said that the temporary suspension is limited to Trincomalee district alone. The Trinco district office of the SLMM is located along Inner Harbor Road, which is situated close to Trincomalee civilian jetty.

Normally the monitors travel by vehicle through Nilaveli-Trincomalee to report to their office in the town. The cycle bomb attack on SLN navy convoy by suspected Tamil Tigers took place on Tuesday on this route.

The SLMM leadership was concerned about the safety of their officials following the escalation of attacks on Sri Lankan soldiers and retaliatory gunfire from the security forces.

Risk of returning to war, says SLMM

Jan 13 - The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission in a statement issued on January 13 said, "SLMM strongly condemns the latest attack on Sri Lanka Navy soldiers in Cheddikulam on the 12th of January. Our sympathy goes to the families that have been affected by this brutal murder.

This attack is yet another serious blow to the Ceasefire Agreement and SLMM believes that if such attacks or retaliation of such attacks continue the Ceasefire Agreement will be over. Over 100 people were killed last month half of which were civilians. Killings and serious attacks continue and the situation is getting worse. It is our assessment that if the Parties don't react immediately they risk going back to war.

Various actors in the international community have blamed the LTTE for attacking Government troops but the LTTE has continuously denied any involvement. The LTTE claims that "the People" are behind the attacks on the military. SLMM finds this explanation unacceptable. It is safe to say that LTTE involvement cannot be ruled out and we find the LTTE's indifference to these attacks worrying.

It is however clear that people are suffering and unfortunately there have been several reports of civilian harassment by the Security Forces in relation to increased security measures. The harassment often takes a form of harsh treatment of the Tamil population in relation to the attacks. We would like to urge the Government of Sri Lanka and the Security Forces to prevent such actions from taking place.

It is important to emphasise that the current situation also stems from the fact that alternative armed elements have been able to operate freely in the East in Government controlled areas. These forces have destabilised the ceasefire and are one

of the major reasons for increased tension between the Parties. We therefore urge the Government of Sri Lanka to face up to its responsibility to disarm these other armed groups so that the rule of law can be reinstated in the affected areas.

Increasing amount of civilians is being caught in the middle leading to major disturbances in the local communities. The conflict between the two sides is hurting civilians and preventing any restoration to normalcy.

We urge both Parties to consider carefully how they can mend the situation instead of merely blaming each other and pointing fingers. The Parties need to come up with firm confidence building measures with the truthful aim of reaching a peaceful solution. Actions speak louder than words and we feel that we need to see more commitment from the two Parties if war is not to break out in Sri Lanka."

Brutal killing of five students

One of the worst excesses committed by the security forces since the recent escalation of violence is the summary killing of five old students of Trincomalee Sri Koneswara Hindu College in Trincomalee on 2 January at about 7.30 pm. Two more students, one from Sri Koneswara Hindu College and another from St. Joseph's College in Trincomalee were severely injured in the same incident and were warded in the intensive care unit (ICU) of the Trincomalee general hospital.

All the students were under 20 years of age. The dead victims have been identified as Shanmugarajah Gajendran, Logitharajah Rohan, Thangathurai Sivanantha, Yogarajah Hemachandra and Manoharan Rajihar. The two injured victims are Yogarajah Poongalalone (St. Joseph's College) Pararajasingham Kokulraj (Koneswara Hindu College).

When the victims, all friends of each other, had gathered as usual to spend the evening near the roundabout junction where Koneswara Road and Dockyard Road meet, in front of the Dutch Bay sea beach, a grenade was thrown at them from a passing three-wheeler. Some of the students sustained injuries from the explosion.

Immediately following the grenade explosion a vehicle arrived at the spot, from which armed services personnel alighted. The students were severely assaulted, and though initially they were put into the vehicle, they were later pushed out of the vehicle and shot. The vehicle left the scene immediately thereafter. Civilians were prevented by other armed services personnel on duty from going to the scene. It was after some considerable delay that the dead bodies and in the injured persons were taken to the General Hospital, Trincomalee.

Initially the Defence Ministry quoting military sources alleged that the five youth had died when a grenade in their own possession exploded. It was also alleged that all the victims were connected to the LTTE. But the military could not sustain either of their allegations for long.

The report of the Judicial Medical Officer, Dr. G. Gunatunge, who carried out the post-mortem examination on the bodies of the victims revealed that three of them sustained gunshot injuries on the head, while the other two sustained gunshot injuries to the abdomen and chest. The five youth killed came by their death as a result of gunshot injuries.

The LTTE said that that it had nothing to do with the victims and that it was a premeditated attack, according to LTTE Trincomalee political head S. Elilan who also blamed a team from the Special Task Force for the killings.

The residents of Trincomalee were shocked and angered by

these brutal killings which was evident from the mammoth gathering of people who attended the funeral of the five victims which took place on Thursday 5 January.

The five murders also saw the entry of the Tamil Resurgence Force (TRF) in Trincomalee. On the day of the funeral, TRF issued a statement informing that Trincomalee would observe an indefinite hartal from the following day till all new military sentry points were removed.

Two bunkers were set on fire and another two damaged by youth travelling right at the front of the funeral procession. But there was no confrontation between security forces and the mourners. The police just stood by while the youth attacked the empty bunkers and the SLMM too drove off without interfering.

LTTE blows up Dvora, 13 Navy men dead

In one of the worst attacks, LTTE's Sea Tigers blew up a Sri Lankan Naval vessel, a Dvora Fast Attack Craft in the seas off Foul Point, Trincomalee, killing 13 sailors including two senior officers. The attack took place around 1am on 7 January. Two sailors were later rescued from the sea by fishermen, Defence sources said..

It is suspected that Sea Tigers in an explosive laden boat on a suicide mission emerged out of a flotilla of ordinary fishing boats and sailed at fast speed and rammed into the Fast Attack Craft destroying it completely in a huge explosion. Another naval vessel on duty at sea at the same time in close proximity had escaped attack.

The LTTE vessel had been taking cover among fishing boats anchored in the area before suddenly speeding towards and crashing against the FAC, recounted Brig Samarasinghe. "There were a lot of dinghies and fishing craft in the area. The suicide boat was among them,"

Fifteen navy personnel including two officers were on board the ill fated craft and was three nautical miles off Foul Point, when the attack occurred.

So far neither the wreckage of the stricken vessel nor any of the 13 missing sailors has been found by the navy divers. Among the missing are the vessel's Commander Lieutenant Commander M.A.K. WanAratne and Sub Lieutenant M.N. Samarakoon. The two sailors Premalal and Ratnayake who survived the attack are undergoing treatment at the Sri Lanka Navy hospital.

"We believe it was a Tiger suicide mission. The Dvora was completely destroyed," said Navy Spokesmen Commodore Jayantha Perera. The Dvora gunboat was one of the six, 'Shaldag dvoras' in the possession of the Navy and one of the two Dvora vessels which were on a regular patrol mission in the Eastern seas.

The Tamil Tigers have denied responsibility for the attack, but few take their denial seriously. Most analysts and commentators are convinced that it was the work of the LTTE which had undertaken similar missions in previous years. The attack on the Dvora has come in the background of an increasing number of Tiger attacks on the security forces since last December.

This is the second major Sea Tiger attack on a Naval craft in the latest round of escalating violence.. In the first attack on naval personnel on December 22, 2005, the LTTE destroyed a Sri Lankan naval dinghy and allegedly took three sailors hostage in an incident off the Pallimunai coast in the north-western district of Mannar. According to a government press release, two

naval dinghies were on a routine patrol in the Pallimunai lagoon when ten LTTE craft surrounded them and opened fire. One of the naval craft was immobilised and three of its sailors were captured. The government described the LTTE's action as a "deliberate hostile act" in violation of Article 1.3 of the ceasefire agreement, which had given the Sri Lankan Navy the right to patrol the coastline. Hostage taking was also a violation of the ceasefire agreement, it said. However, the LTTE has firmly denied that it had taken any Navy personnel as hostages in this incident.

Australia condemns escalation of violence

Jan 10 - Mr Alexander Downer, Australia's Minister of Foreign Affairs has in a press release said that "Australia condemns the recent increase in violence in Sri Lanka, particularly the attacks by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the north and east which have killed at least 60 members of the security forces since December."

Mr Downer further said, "Australia also condemns the assassination of the Hon Joseph Pararajasingham MP at Christmas midnight mass in Batticaloa, in eastern Sri Lanka.

"Australia recognises the continued restraint shown by the Government of Sri Lanka in the face of these latest attacks, as well as its determination not to allow the LTTE's actions to undermine efforts to achieve a negotiated peace.

"Australia calls on the LTTE and paramilitary groups to respect the ceasefire agreement and heed the recent call of the Co-Chairs of the Tokyo Donor Conference to stop all violations of the ceasefire.

"Australia considers that the conflict can only be resolved through a negotiated settlement that meets the aspirations of all Sri Lankans. We call upon all parties to take steps to end the recent violence and return, without delay, to talks on the implementation of the ceasefire agreement."

LTTE should name 'people' behind attacks

Jan 7 - The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) has asked the LTTE to name the "people" responsible for the series of violent attacks in the Jaffna district.

In response to numerous denials by the LTTE that it carried out any armed attacks on security personnel and civilians in the North-East, the SLMM has called upon the LTTE to identify those whom they describe as "people" responsible for the attacks.

SLMM spokesperson Helen Olafsdottir told the press that the LTTE had told them that people in Jaffna were behind these attacks.

Olafsdottir said the Mission had asked the LTTE whether they were responsible for these charges. They had denied responsibility, saying the people were behind these attacks.

"Since they are so sure that people had carried out these killings, we asked them to identify them to the Mission," said Olafsdottir. She said the SLMM did not want to whitewash anyone. "If the LTTE is so certain that people in the North and East were behind these attacks, they should be able to identify them," she asserted. "We asked them: If you are so certain it was people, why can you not identify them," she said.

"Similarly we have asked Security Forces to come out with concrete evidence to prove their allegations. The SLMM cannot act without firm evidence," she said.

Referring to the peace talks, she said if the LTTE and the Government were truly committed to have talks, the venue of the talks could not have been an issue as it appears to be the case now. "If there's a will there's way," she added. "I must say both the LTTE and the Government had the opportunity to have ground-level talks, but they have been missed out by both the parties," she said.

Church leaders call for stop to all killings

The Catholic Bishop's Conference, the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka and other Church leaders have made an impassioned plea for an immediate end to the senseless killings in the country. The church leaders in a statement issued on 9 January titled the "Ecumenical intervention for peace" said no one seemed to be able to stop the spiral of killing for killing and no one took the responsibility for wanting to stop this trend.

The Church Leaders said: "The people of this country must take serious note that the culture of violence is spreading dangerously and indiscriminately. No one seems to be able to stop the spiral of killing for killing. No one even takes responsibility for wanting to stop this trend. Different but equally tragic incidents are reported almost daily from various parts of the country, and the North and East in particular. As if by design, the centre shifts from Jaffna, to Colombo, to Batticaloa, to Mannar, and now after a period of some calm, to Trincomalee.

"The recent deaths of young students in Trincomalee have filled the hearts of people with deep sorrow and even indignation. Some newspapers reported that the post mortem verdict stated that they had died of gunshot injuries. Other versions claim that they died of a hand grenade explosion. The truth will emerge only through an independent commission acceptable to all parties. But whatever the truth, this heinous act that has snuffed the lives of young men in their prime must be condemned without reservation by all just and peace loving persons.

"These were Sri Lankan young men who died in an area under the control of the Government of Sri Lanka. Consequently we welcome the decision of the President to inquire into these killings. We urge that this inquiry be comprehensive and that the families, friends and teachers of these young men as well as competent forensic experts be heard and the public informed of its findings. For a start the post-mortem report should be released. Such immediate and impartial action brings some sense of justice to loved ones who can never be fully compensated for their loss.

To know how and why their sons were killed helps the process of mourning and healing.

"An equally heinous act that requires unreserved condemnation is the very recent attack on the naval craft off the Trincomalee coast that has taken the lives of at least thirteen sailors. This is a blatant violation of the ceasefire agreement and the LTTE simply cannot disclaim responsibility for this and the recent spate of killing that has taken the lives of scores of service personnel. We appreciate the overall restraint shown thus far by the Services and urge that they and the Government of Sri Lanka would continue this trend, in spite of the recurring and highly provocative nature of these attacks.

"We reiterate and totally agree with the several voices that have condemned all killings whether innocent civilians, service personnel, LTTE cadres or cadres of other groups. We similarly call for an end to these continuing and senseless killings in

our country. The killing of any human is a judgment on us all. Whatever the rationale or ideology, any killing is an indication of our failure to live with differences and our inability to find a non-violent, inclusive and civilised way to deal with grievance and conflict. We are sorry that decades of bloodshed, deprivation and suffering have not provided the counter spirituality and resolve to respect human life and the dignity of our brothers and sisters of the other ethnic group, religion or political ideology".

The Statement of the Ecumenical Intervention for Peace has been approved by the following Church Leaders.

Catholic Bishop's Conference President and Kandy Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando, CBC Vice President and Mannar Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Rayappu Joseph, Colombo Archbishop Most Rev. Dr. Oswald Gomis, Chilaw Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Frank Marcus Fernando, Jaffna Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Savundranayagam, Trincomalee/Batticaloa Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Kingsley Swamipillai, Kurunegala Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Raymond Peiris, Rt. Rev. Colombo Auxiliary Bishop Dr. Manus Peiris, Badulla Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Winston Fernando, Galle Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony, Anuradhapura Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Norbert Andradi, Chilaw Coadjutor Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Valence Mendis, Ratnapura Diocese Administrator Very Rev. Fr. Damian Fernando, Administrator.

Church Leaders of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka Baptist Sangamaya Chairperson and SL National Christian Council President Rev. Kingsley Perera, Kurunegala Bishop Rt. Rev. Kumara Illaugasinghe, Colombo Bishop Rt. Rev. Duleep de Chickera, Methodist Church President Rev. W P Ebenezer Joseph, Dutch Reformed Church President Rev. C.N. Jansz, Presbyterian Church Moderator Rev. K Piyadasa, Moderator's Commissary Church of South India - Jaffna Diocese, Rev. P.R. Navendrananugoolan, Salvation Army Territorial Commander Colonel Roy Frans, and SL National Christian Council General Secretary Rev. Dr. Jayasiri Peiris..

Co-Chairs call for end to campaign of violence

Dec 19 - The Co-Chairs of the Tokyo Donor Conference in the final statement after the conclusion of their meeting in Brussels Monday (Dec 19) condemned "in the strongest terms the recent escalation in violence in the North and East", called on the LTTE "to put an immediate end to their on-going campaign of violence and again urge the LTTE to demonstrate their commitment to the Ceasefire Agreement and the peace process," and warned that "Failure to demonstrate a willingness to change would not be without serious consequences." They also recognized that activities of the paramilitary groups are among the causes for the deteriorating situation and urged "the Government to ensure that such groups cease their paramilitary activities, as a demonstration of its commitment to a peaceful way forward."

Full text of the statement released in Brussels follows:

"The Co-Chairs of the Tokyo Donor Conference met in Brussels on 19 December 2005 to review the situation in Sri Lanka. A representative of the Indian Government met separately with the Co-Chairs for an exchange of views.

The Co-Chairs note that Sri Lanka is facing a crucial choice between increased violence and re-invigorating the peace process. The prospects for long-term peace lie in the hands of the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE. The Sri Lankan people want peace. A failure to respond to this desire would be a

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tragic step backward.

The Co-Chairs note the recent LTTE appeal for "a reasonable political framework". However, the Co-Chairs condemn the LTTE's enforced boycott of the Presidential election in parts of the North and East, which deprived Tamil voters of their right to vote. The Co-Chairs also condemn in the strongest terms the recent escalation in violence in the North and East. The Co-Chairs call on the LTTE to put an immediate end to their on-going campaign of violence and again urge the LTTE to demonstrate their commitment to the Ceasefire Agreement and the peace process. Failure to demonstrate a willingness to change would not be without serious consequences.

The Co-Chairs recognise that activities of paramilitary groups are another of the causes for the deteriorating situation. They urge the Government to ensure that such groups cease their paramilitary activities, as a demonstration of its commitment to a peaceful way forward.

The Co-Chairs welcome the agreement of the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE to hold immediate talks to review the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement, and also welcome Japan's offer to host these. They strongly urge both sides to start such talks without further delay or prevarication.

The Co-Chairs welcome the President's aim to develop a credible political platform in the South to take the peace process forward. The Co-Chairs call on all in the South, particularly the main political parties, to contribute constructively and flexibly. The Co-Chairs believe that such a settlement should be based on a united Sri Lanka, taking account of the aspirations of all communities.

The Co-Chairs commend the Muslim community for their restraint in the face of recent provocations.

The Co-Chairs welcome the Sri Lankan Government's confirmation of its confidence to the Norwegian facilitation, as well as that of the LTTE. The Co-Chairs state their full and unequivocal support for Norway's efforts, building on progress made in peace talks held since the Ceasefire Agreement.

The Co-Chairs equally express their fullest support for the work of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) in an increasingly volatile environment. Ensuring a conducive environment for continued SLMM operations and the security of the SLMM staff remains vital.

Finally, as a further sign of commitment to the peaceful resolution of the civil conflict, the Co-Chairs express their readiness to hold their next meeting in Sri Lanka close to the fourth anniversary of the Ceasefire Agreement."

(Background: The EU, Norway, Japan, and the United States were the four Co-Chairs of the Tokyo Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka (June 2003). It was agreed in Tokyo that the Co-Chairs would continue to meet regularly and monitor progress in the peace process in Sri Lanka.)

Bishop pleads for immediate talks

Colombo's Anglican Bishop Rt. Rev. Duleep de Chickera, in statement issued on 27 December condemned the spree of killing in the North East and urged the government and the LTTE to open up talks soon. The Bishop said that the stale-

mate over the location for talks should be ended immediately.

"Our beloved Sri Lanka is gripped by deep disappointment and sorrow at the rapidly worsening spate of violence that grips the country. In the name of entrenched causes, distorted agendas and ideologies, we are slowly destroying ourselves.

Yesterdays brutal killing of Joseph Pararajasingham at worship in Church, must be condemned without reservation by all peace loving people of all religions, ethnicities and political parties. He was a senior Tamil Christian parliamentarian, liked and respected by a cross section of people. He served the people of the East in Particular with dedication. His death is a loss to the continuing political discourse In the Country. We offer our condolences to his wife and the children, and indeed our prayers for the recovery of his wife and all others injured in this shooting.

It is in this same spirit that we condemn the rape and killing of a young woman at Pungudutivu, the killings of several soldiers and naval personnel, and the violence against the Vice Chancellor of the Jaffna University. The Committee appointed to probe these incidents must act fast and go public on their findings. Perpetrators must be named and dealt with under the existing law.

All killing is wrong and cannot be justified or condoned. These killings violate the basic human rights of people to life. They snatch precious loved ones away from people. They spread fear and anger amongst the people, and reduce whatever chances there are for peace; and prolong suffering and deprivation.

It is for these very reasons that it is now imperative for the Government and LTTE to expedite talks. A. compromise on

the location stalemate is necessary and possible. Such a compromise need not be seen as weakness or damaging to the stare and image of either side. In fact the people of this country will see it as an expression of strong political character and Intent.

Such early talks will also provide the forum for discussing the factors that have provoked the violence and killings, as well as allegations and counter allegations. Such talks inevitably indicate fresh steps towards peace and build some trust.

The seriousness of these developments should be seen as a call to prayer by all communities. The beginning of the New Year provides an excellent opportunity for the invocation of Blessings and Grace on our people and land."

Solheim calls for urgent talks

Dec 27 - Norwegian Development Minister Mr. Erik Solheim in a statement issued on 27 December, expressed his Government's deep concern about the recent increase in violence in Sri Lanka. "The high level of violence and the tragic loss of life are putting the Ceasefire Agreement at risk and will make it very difficult to secure further progress in the peace process," said Mr Solheim.

Today's claymore ambush on a Sri Lankan vehicle in Jaffna, the killings of Sri Lankan Navy sailors in Mannar on 23 December, the shooting of civilians near Jaffna University, numerous other attacks on military personnel and civilians, violence against Muslims and the assassination of parliamentarian Joseph Pararajasingham during Mass on Christmas Eve are terrible and tragic events. Mr Solheim said that all acts of violence must be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

Mr Solheim stressed that the Sri Lanka Monitoring Missions is carrying out its responsibilities under very difficult circumstances and expressed his appreciation for the work the mission is doing.

The Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE have the responsibility for safeguarding the Ceasefire Agreement. The two parties to the CFA must meet urgently to discuss ways and means to strengthen the implementation of the Agreement. The focus should now be on the need to stop the bloodshed and prevent further loss of life. The CFA must be upheld to prevent the further escalation of violence. The GOSL and the LTTE should put aside the discussion on venue and meet face to face as soon as possible. "The venue for a meeting is of no importance to Norway. What is important to us is that the GOSL and the LTTE meet as soon as possible to discuss the CFA and the recent tragic and dangerous developments. There is no time to lose," said Mr Solheim.

Dec 20 - The global community is gravely concerned over the rising tide of violence in the Jaffna peninsula and calling for urgent talks between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers to de-escalate the conflict. This message was conveyed to the LTTE's Chief Negotiator and theoretician, Mr. Anton Balasingham when a high level Norwegian delegation met him at his London residence Tuesday (20 Dec) morning.

The Norwegian delegation comprised Mr. Erik Solheim, Minister of International Development and Special Envoy to the Sri Lanka Peace Process, Mr. Ola Brevik, a senior official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Mr. Hans Brattskar, Ambassador to Sri Lanka and Mr. Sondre Bjotvedt, another MFA official.

The discussions reportedly lasted three hours. Explaining in detail about the deliberations of the crucial meeting of Co-

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Chairs of the donor community (US, EU, Japan and Norway) in Brussels Monday, Mr. Solheim said the international community favoured immediate talks between the parties in conflict in the implementation of the truce, without prolonging dispute over the venue. The world community, Mr. Solheim pointed out, is alarmed at the sudden escalation in violence in Jaffna, which has the potential to break into a fully fledged conflict if it is not arrested in time. The Norwegian delegation underscored the importance of resuming talks on the operative mechanism of the ceasefire without further delay. Mr. Solheim pleaded that the venue should not be a major dispute for talks. "It is of paramount importance that both parties should meet urgently and start talks towards consolidating the ceasefire agreement," he reportedly told Mr. Balasingham.

Mr. Balasingham, in response, while explaining the reality of the ground situation, reportedly blamed the Sri Lankan army of occupation for unleashing ruthless violence against university students and staff. The armed forces are adopting high-handed repressive methods, utilising brutal force to suppress peaceful demonstrations by students and civilians, thereby generating public resentment and unrest in the northern city, Mr. Balasingham had told the Norwegians.

Christian leaders urge urgent talks

Dec 31 - Christian religious leaders representing the Catholic, Anglican and Methodist churches in Sri Lanka yesterday urged the LTTE to resume peace talks with the government immediately and take necessary measures to restore normalcy in the troubled North of the country. In wide-ranging talks for more than two and a half hours with LTTE Political Wing leader S.P. Thamilselvan in Kilinochchi, the Christian leaders expressed serious concern over the deteriorating security situation in the North which has seen several violent acts in the previous few weeks.

Jaffna Bishop the Rt. Rev. Thomas Soundaranayagam said they discussed the tragic plight of the people in the Northeast, the underlying causes for the situation, the non implementation of the clauses in the ceasefire agreement and the problems resulting from this.

The LTTE political head in his response had said they were ready for talks with the government but stressed on the alleged harassment meted out by the military against civilians in the North which was scuttling the peace moves.

The LTTE media unit said Mr. Thamilselvan had told the prelates that the government was now considering South Africa as a possible venue to hold the first round of talks with the LTTE to strengthen the ceasefire agreement. "First the government said it was going to be a venue in Japan and then a location in Asia but now it was considering South Africa. We are firm that talks should be held in Oslo as it is a neutral venue respected by all," Mr. Thamilselvan said.

He also expressed his disappointment at the clergy for not immediately condemning the assassination of the late TNA parliamentarian Joseph Pararajasingham who was killed while participating at a Christmas mass in Batticaloa.

The delegation of Christian priests comprised, Bishop Thomas Soundaranayagam (Jaffna), Bishop Rayappu Joseph (Mannar), Rev. Jeyakumar (Hudec, Jaffna), Rev. Kadirgamar (Methodist Church), Rev. S.P. Nesakumar (Archdeacon of Jaffna) and Bishop Viani Fernando (Kandy), Bishop Duleep de Chikera (Colombo) and Bishop Kumara Illangasinghe

(Kurunagala), Rev. Ebenezer Joseph (Methodist Church) and Rev. Jeyasiri Peiris (National Christian Council).

Tiger deputy political head S. Thangan, LTTE Peace Secretariat head S. Pulithevan and the Tiger women wing deputy political head Miss. Thamilvili also attended the meeting.

Rights Commission appoints special team:

5 Jan - The escalation of violence has resulted in an increase in human rights violations such as arbitrary killings, rape, cordon and search operations, arrests and detention of persons in the country in general but more particularly in the North and East, said Chairperson, Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy.

The HRCSL has experienced difficulty in conducting inquiries and reporting on human rights issues, utilizing its present staff, both at the head office and regional offices. It has become necessary to appoint a team, headed by a special rapporteur to advise the HRCSL on measures to protect the human rights of civilians in the context of the use of emergency powers as well as alleged violations of the ceasefire agreement.

The HRCSL has appointed the former member of the Constitutional Council and retired High Court Judge T. Suntheralingam as special rapporteur. The other members of the special team are a retired officer of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service M. C. M. Iqbal and President of the Association of War Widows Ms. Visaka Dharmadasa, she said.

The cooperation of the police and the security forces has been solicited to ensure services of the programme. The special rapporteur and his team will work at the Secretariat, No. 36/7, Kynsey Road, Borella, Colombo 8 where the public could communicate with them, Dr. Coomaraswamy said.

Indiscriminate arrests condemned

Jan 6 - A 'people's campaign' was launched on Friday (6) evening at the Old Town Hall junction, Pettah in Colombo in protest against the alleged killings and indiscriminate arrests of Tamils under the Emergency Regulations.

The demonstration was spearheaded by Western People's Front, Upcountry People's Front, United Socialist Party, New Left Front, New Democratic Party, Trade Unions and other organizations.

Demonstrators carried placards and banners with slogans such as "Stop Arresting People in the guise of the Emergency", "We denounce arrests of innocent Tamils" and "Is the Human Rights Commission Sleeping?"

Tamil National Alliance parliamentarians, N.Raviraj and Suresh Premachandran, Western Province People's Front Leader Mano Ganesan, New Leftist Movement leader Vikramabhu Karunarathna, NLF senior leader Mr.V.Thirunavukkarasu, Leader of the Democratic Left Front Mr.Vasudeva Nanayakara, Secretary of the New Democratic Front Mr.E.Thambiah, and several leading political leaders also participated in the demonstration.

Demonstrators urged the government to show its honesty by solving the ethnic problem in a manner acceptable to the Tamil people. The government must seek an immediate political solution to the ethnic conflict instead of creating a belligerent atmosphere. They also demanded that all abductions, killings and arrests should immediately stop. The demonstrators pointed out that before coming to power politicians assured

equality before law and human rights to all communities. But these rights had been denied to Tamils residing in Colombo and the suburbs under Emergency Regulations in the recent times.

Anti-War Front calls for urgent resumption of talks

Dec 29 - The National Anti-War Front (NAWF), in a statement issued in Colombo, called upon the Government of Sri Lanka to invite the Norwegian facilitators immediately to resume negotiations with the LTTE, and called upon the LTTE to stop immediately all forms of violations of the CFA, including the attack on State military forces and attacks on political opponents.

The NAWF statement issued on 29 December said, "The CeaseFire Agreement (CFA) is in a deep crisis. Although there is continued violation of the CFA over the years, the current phase of accelerated attacks against the State armed forces in the North and East and the attacks of the para-military groups against the LTTE are rapidly pushing towards the resumption of hostilities between the government and the LTTE. "We condemn all forms of violations of the CFA. We express our condemnation against the increased attacks on State military forces by the LTTE, assassination of the Batticaloa Parliamentarian Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham and other attacks of para-military groups collaborating with security forces. The CFA cannot be protected without genuine commitment of the parties to the agreement. Any disputes related to CFA have to be resolved only through negotiations. It is immoral to use violence to address the grievances while the CFA is in operation.

"We call upon the LTTE to stop immediately all forms of violations of the CFA, including the attack on State military forces and attacks on political opponents. In a similar manner,

we call upon the Sri Lanka government to take every step necessary to prevent all violations of the CFA either by the State armed forces or the para-military groups.

"The very purpose of signing the CFA is to prevent the destruction of human lives and to create an environment conducive to negotiating a political settlement. Although both parties have verbally expressed their preparedness and willingness to resume negotiation with the facilitation of Norwegian Government, little progress has been made so far. The majority of the people in Sri Lanka do not want to see a return to war.

"We call upon the government and the LTTE to make every effort to stop all CFA violations and to demonstrate commitments to the CFA."

AI concerned about escalation of violence

In a statement issued on 11 January, Amnesty International has appealed to all parties to halt the killings, abductions and "disappearances" being reported daily from the north and east of Sri Lanka.

Over one hundred people including around 40 civilians and 60 security forces personnel have been killed in a month of bloodshed. Amnesty International is appalled by the news of the killing by unidentified attackers of Member of Parliament Joseph Pararajasingam, while he attended mass at St Mary's Church, Batticaloa on Christmas Eve, said Purna Sen, Asia-Pacific Director at the organization.

This was followed soon after by the killing on 2 January of five high school students from Sri Koneswara Hindu College and St Joseph's College in Trincomalee. Although the army first claimed they were killed by a grenade that the students were carrying, following a post mortem it was revealed that the students had been shot, three of them in the head. The President has ordered an inquiry into the killings.

Earlier, on 16 December, a young Tamil woman, Ilayathambiy Tharshini, was raped and murdered in Punguduthivu and her body dumped in a well, near a Sri Lanka naval base. Amnesty International is very concerned about an increase in reports of the sexual abuse of women, said Purna Sen.

On 4 December a Sri Lankan government administrative officer, Mr A L M Faleel, from Kathankudy in the Eastern Province, was badly injured in a shooting allegedly carried out by the LTTE. He was taken to hospital in Colombo where he later died of his injuries.

Amnesty International is urging the government of Sri Lanka to institute independent and impartial inquiries into these killings and bring those responsible to justice. The organization is also appealing to the LTTE to abide by its commitments to uphold international humanitarian law.

At least ten people are reported to have "disappeared" following arrest by the security forces in northern Sri Lanka in the last two months. Amnesty International calls on the government to ensure full and impartial investigations into these reports of "disappearances" in order to prevent this heinous human rights violation re-establishing itself as a pattern in Sri Lanka. In addition, the organization is extremely concerned at reports that at least 250 families have fled the Jaffna peninsula in the last few weeks, as the population fears a return to full scale war.

The deteriorating security situation will also drastically effect aid and relief operations to those displaced by the tsunami and by years of conflict who see no hope of returning to their homes.

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JOSEPH PARARAJASINGHAM, MP

Murder during Mass on Christmas Day

Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham, a senior Tamil politician and the Batticaloa district Member of Parliament (MP) of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) was shot and killed by two unidentified gunmen at St. Mary's co-cathedral church in Batticaloa town while attending Christmas prayers early morning at 1.20 am Sunday (25). He was 71.

Mr Pararajasingham arrived at the Church at 10.30 pm where the services led by Batticaloa Bishop Kingley Swampillai started at 11.30 p.m.

The veteran parliamentarian died on the spot while his wife Sugunam Pararajasingham and seven other civilians were admitted to Batticaloa hospital after being severely injured in the incident. Pararajasingham's sister, Ms Sajadaii also was among the injured while the other injured persons have been identified as Mrs. Mary Ferif, Mrs Jeyaraj, Mrs Sisiliya, Mrs R. Manmohan, Miss L. Muthulingam and P. David.

Hundreds of Christians were attending the midnight Christmas service at this reputed church when unidentified gunmen, mingled with devotees inside, carried out this assassination, regardless of the religious importance of the occasion.

At least four gunmen had entered the Church from the rear and opened fire at the Parliamentarian. Two police body guards providing security to the MP were at the main entrance to the Church while another armed policeman was with the MP at the time of the incident. Police said that there was gunfire exchange between the police security guards and the attackers, leading to several others receiving injuries.

Meanwhile, the Police Operational Headquarters in a statement said that Mr. Pararajasingham had been provided with an armed escort, which included policemen from the Ministerial Security Division. Three members of the Police armed escort were providing security to the Parliamentarian at the time of the incident, according to Batticaloa Police Station, the statement said.

Though the assassins of the MP remain unidentified, the LTTE and the Tamil National Alliance to which Pararaj-

asingham belonged have accused Tamil "paramilitaries" who operate in collusion with government security forces for the killing. Many people from eastern Batticaloa believe that the murder might have been carried out by the Karuna Group which defected from the LTTE.

Mr Joseph Pararajasingham was born on 26 November 1934 and started his career as a draftsman at the Batticaloa Kachcheri (Government Agent's office). He started public service as a part-time journalist first with the Federal Party's weekly, 'Suthanthiran' and later with the Tamil daily 'Thinapathi' where he wrote stories under the name Sugunam Joseph.

Ironically, the journalist-turned politician entered parliament in May 1990 to fill the vacancy created by the assassination of TULF MP Sam Tambimuttu who along with his wife, Kala was allegedly assassinated by the Tamil Tigers in Colombo.

He was re-elected in 1994 with the highest number of preferential votes ever received by a Tamil candidate in the NorthEast. He was again elected on the final count of preferential votes in the October 2000 elections. He again became an MP under the national list in 2002.

During the 90's as the ethnic war escalated with human rights violations became a common occurrence, Pararajasingham got more involved taking up cases of detention, disappearances, torture, rape and arbitrary killings taking place in the Northeast of the country.

He was an Executive Member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the SAARC Parliamentary Association.

Tigers condemn killing

Condemning the "appalling and vicious murder" of the Tamil National Alliance MP Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham, the Political Wing of the Liberation Tigers, charged the Sri Lankan military intelligence and the paramilitaries working with them for the killing of Mr. Pararajasingham, a Tamil nationalist and human rights activist. The Tigers also said the killing at the Christmas mass symbolised the "long hand of the chauvinis-

tic forces such as the Jathika Hela Urumaya," was working through the Sri Lankan military intelligence wing.

Fulltext of the media release issued by the Political Wing of the Liberation Tigers follows: "Mr Joseph Pararajasingham, Tamil nationalist and human rights activist, was brutally shot dead by the Sri Lankan intelligence unit while attending Christmas mass

Mr Joseph Pararajasingham, a Tamil nationalist and TNA member of parliament, who worked tirelessly to promote and protect human rights, was shot dead on Christmas Eve while he was attending Christmas mass at St. Mary's church situated inside a high security zone of Batticaloa town. He was murdered by the Sri Lankan military intelligence wing and the paramilitaries working with them, including the Karuna Group and EPDP. Mr Pararajasingham's wife, Mrs Sugunam, and six others were injured in the shooting.

"Mr Pararajasingham prayed for peace and freedom for his people and had just received communion from the bishop when the Sri Lankan intelligence unit and the paramilitaries shot him and escaped.

"Mr Pararajasingham raised his voice for the human rights of the Tamil people at the international stage and at diplomatic forums. He maintained solid relationships with human rights organizations and worked hard for the formation and growth of the Northeast Secretariat on Human Rights (NESOHR). It is this towering humanitarian who was shot dead by the Sri Lankan military intelligence wing.

"This well-planned murder proves that the long hand of the chauvinistic forces such as the Jathika Hela Urumaya is working through the Sri Lankan military intelligence wing. The chauvinistic forces have taken away this patriot who has worked for the Tamil nation's liberation and promotion of human rights. We strongly condemn this appalling, vicious murder. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and relatives."

V. Balakumaran, a senior leader of the Liberation Tigers (LTTE) said, "The murder of rights advocates in churches and holy sanctuaries is a historical phenomenon. From El Salvador's Archbishop Oscar Romero to our own Joseph Pararajasingham, their lives did not end with death. On the contrary, they become alive into the collective consciousness of their people for whom they have struggled."

Catholic Bishop mourns

The Bishop of Jaffna and the priests belonging to the diocese expressed profound sadness at the loss of Joseph Pararajasingham and said the act was unjustifiable and unacceptable to men of good-will. "Perpetrators of this inhuman act will, one day, stand trial in the presence of the creator," Bishop of Jaffna, Thomas Soundaranaygam said in his message.

The Bishop's statement further said, "We are deeply shocked and grieved at the unexpected and sudden passing away of Mr Joseph Pararajasingham, the TNA MP for Batticaloa. He was murdered in the cathedral immediately after receiving Holy Communion from the hands of the Bishop of Trinco-Batticaloa, Dr Kingsley Swampillia, during the midnight Christmas Service. This violence is unjustifiable. This is unacceptable to men of good-will. Perpetrators of this inhuman act will, one day, stand trial in the presence of the creator.

"He served the public as well as the church to the best of his ability. During the Jubilee celebrations of the Trinco-Batticaloa Catholic church, his contribution was immeasurable. He was very close to the Bishop in the dioceses, in advancing the interests of the church. He was very helpful and articulate in assisting the Bishops' Council of Sri Lanka, by expressing his solidarity, joining other Catholic members of Parliament in protecting the interests of the church.

"We are sure his soul will be rewarded by Almighty God for all the merits he has accrued by living a true and exemplary Christian life and for dedicating his life for the welfare and emancipation of the Tamil people. We offer our prayers and express our deepest sympathies to the bereaved family. May his soul rest in God's peace."

Govt condemns killing

While condemning the killing of TNA MP Joseph Pararajasingham, the Government is to appoint a special investigation team to conduct a full probe into this assassination and bring to justice the perpetrators.

"The Government condemns this cowardly act in the strongest possible terms. The Government also denounces

the disrespect shown by the assassins to the sanctity of a church on Christmas day," said a statement issued by the Government.

The assassination of an elected MP is an assault on the very heart of democracy. It is clear that this assassination has been carried out to serve a specific agenda, in that it creates the environment to further escalate the cycle of violence in the North and East perpetuated by the LTTE," the statement added.

TNA condemns

The Tamil National Alliance in a statement condemned "the despicable and dastardly assassination of Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham, Member of Parliament within the premises of the Roman Catholic Church at Batticaloa during the Christmas Mass."

The statement added, "Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham became a member of the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchchi- the Federal Party- shortly after it's formation, and was a member of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) from its inception. He was an Executive Committee Member and Member of the TULF politburo and at the time of his demise was the senior vice-president of the TULF. He was fully involved in the democratic and political struggle of the Tamil-speaking people for equality and justice. He was a sober and moderate politician who earned the respect of the Tamil-speaking people. He represented the Batticaloa district in parliament for a considerable period of time.

"He was fully involved with the process to evolve a peaceful resolution to the Tamil national question. He was greatly concerned about the possible resumption of war, and firmly believed that the Tamil question should be resolved in a just and durable manner through dialogue and negotiations.

"The assassination of Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham has occurred at a critical time in the peace process. He has been assassinated in the presence of a large congregation within the church premises in the Batticaloa town, within the government-controlled territory. Eyewitnesses state that while the road leading to the church was manned by Armed Forces, Police personnel were on duty

outside the church.

"The meaningful continuance of the peace process has been long disturbed by certain Tamil paramilitary groups functioning in close collaboration with sections of the Armed Forces, particularly the Military Intelligence Wing. The assassination of Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham is clearly attributable to this ongoing clandestine relationship.

"The assassination of Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham raises serious doubts in regard to the genuineness of the Government's commitment to the honest and purposeful pursuit of the peace process. We consider it our duty to point out that the assassination of Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham, a Tamil leader unequivocally committed to the resolution of the Tamil question by peaceful means is a serious blow to the credibility of the peace process.

"We call upon the Government to immediately take necessary corrective action by dismantling all such clandestine relationships, which would be the only way to infuse any confidence in the peace process," the press release concluded.

LTTE confers 'Maamanithar' title

Leader of the Tamil Tigers, Velupillai Pirapaharan, bestowed the title 'Maamanithar' (Great Human being) on the slain senior parliamentarian Joseph Pararajasingham.

In a statement conferring the award, the LTTE leader said, "The Tamil Nation has lost today a noble man who sacrificed personal ambitions and set a goal working resolutely for the welfare of his people. Silenced today is a voice that relentlessly resonated the freedom of the Tamil homeland and its people. A great man had fallen victim to the enemy's cowardly act of cruelty. It is a great tragedy in the history of the Tamil Eelam freedom struggle.

Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham is a person blessed with rare and incredible qualities. Melodious interaction, simple manners and magnanimity in approach are the hallmarks of his personality. Steadfast and honest, he is an excellent political leader. The Tamil people affectionately hailed him as a formidable fighter for human rights. His extra-ordinary attachment to the Tamil cause gravitated

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all towards him. The demise of Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham is an irreparable loss to the Tamil Nation.

It was never to his liking to live under Sinhala Buddhist majoritarian oppression. He totally detested the disintegration of the collective Tamil Nation under this oppression and subjugation. Setting as his noble goal absolute freedom from this oppressive state, he worked for the independence, dignity and peaceful life of the Tamil people. Motivated by this noble goal, he steadfastly supported the Tamil National freedom struggle. Respecting and accepting wholeheartedly the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and their goal, he contributed immensely to the liberation struggle of the Tamil people. Complex situations, threats and dangers did not deter him from courageously extending his helping hands to Tamil Nationalism and the Tamil Eelam liberation struggle in many ways.

As a Member of Parliament representing the people of Batticaloa and a founder member of the NorthEast Secretariat on Human Rights, he worked relentlessly in pursuit of the rights of the people of Tamil Eelam. Presenting the truth and reasonableness of the Tamil Eelam liberation struggle to the world, was a mission he undertook with passion. The yeoman services he rendered are praiseworthy and of historical significance.

Respecting Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham's patriotism and love of freedom and to honour his contribution to the freedom struggle, I confer on him with pride the highest National Award of "Great Man". Death never destroys noble men who lived to uphold truthful goals. Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham will live forever in the psyche of the Tamil Nation as an epoch making leader."

UNP condemns

United National Party Deputy Leader Karu Jayasuriya said that it was with deep shock and sorrow that he learnt of the assassination of Batticaloa MP Joseph Pararajasingham and the critical injuries caused to his wife while they were at Holy Mass.

"We wish to remind the parties involved in these senseless and brutal killings, that it is not the way to settle problems in a democratic society", the statement added.

Pararajasingham had been a longstanding MP and had served the country and the Tamil community with a sense

of dedication and commitment upholding democratic traditions. He had been an ardent proponent of the idea of a negotiated settlement to the national issue and vehemently shunned violence. His assassination certainly creates an unbridgeable void in the democratic process", Mr Jayasuriya said.

Anandasangaree condemns

TULF Leader V. Anandasangaree condemned the assassination of TNA Parliamentarian Joseph Pararajasingham. In a press release he said, "I very strongly condemn the brutal killing of Hon. Joseph Pararajasingham Member of Parliament, a founder member and the senior vice-president of the TULF. Although there is difference of opinion between us the mutual love and affection between me and his family continued with utmost regard for each other. The special quality of Joe's family is the hospitality they show in treating their friends and constituents.

"It is very unfortunate that there is no respect or value for human life. Whether the victim is a king or an ordinary person, what is lost is a valuable human life. Other than the creator no one is empowered to take another person's life whatever justifiable reasons one may have. A new culture that is developing is killing people in places of worship, which should be strongly condemned. It is now high time for the Government to use the emergency regulations to demand the surrender of arms from all unauthorised persons and to impose severe penalties for all those who possess arms and for all those who have knowledge of such unauthorised possessions.

"While conveying my deepest sympathies to the members of his family I pray for early recovery of Mrs. Sugunam Joseph and the others injured in this incident."

SLMM urges restraint

The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) condemned in its strongest possible terms the killing of TNA MP Joseph Pararajasingham and urged both the army and the LTTE to show restraint as both parties blamed each other for the assassination.

SLMM spokeswoman Helen Olafsdottir termed the assassination a 'barbaric act' and said the ceasefire monitors had begun inquiries. "While the two parties blame each other for the killing I still remain uncertain who is behind this atrocious act, so we urge both sides to show

restraint," Miss Olafsdottir said.

The SLMM spokeswoman also urged both the government and the LTTE to use their influences to calm the tense situation that has arisen in the Batticaloa district following the killing of the Tamil MP.

Funeral

The leader of the Liberation Tigers, Mr. V. Pirapaharan, on Tuesday (27), paid tribute to the slain senior Tamil politician Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham in the Vanni. LTTE's Political Head Mr. S.P. Thamilchelvan and the Financial Head of the LTTE Mr. Thamilenthi, senior members and commanders of the Tigers joined the LTTE leader in Vanni to pay tribute to the slain Tamil leader.

The body of the Tamil National Alliance parliamentarian was taken to LTTE controlled Kakkadicholai on Monday (26) and to Kilinochchi on Tuesday (27).

The body was kept for people to pay tribute at Karadiyanaru in Kakkadicholai for 3 hours. LTTE's Special Commander for Batticaloa, Col. Bhanu, Batticaloa Commander Nagesh, Commander Piraba, Government officials, religious leaders and fellow TNA MPs were present at Karadiyanaru. The body was also kept at Ramakrishnan Mission Vidyalayam for public viewing. Later the body was taken to Kaluwanchikudy and Arayampathi, and then taken to the MP's house in Batticaloa.

The funeral of Pararajasingham was conducted in Batticaloa on 29 December amidst a massive crowd which included UNP MPs Gamini Jayawickrama Perera and Dr. Jayalath Jayawardena besides the TNA MPs. A message of condolence sent by UNP Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, who is currently in Thailand, was read out at the funeral ceremony by MP Gamini Jayawickrama Perera. Among the others present at the funeral were New Left Front stalwart Vasudeva Nanayakkara, Ceylon Workers' Congress Leader A. Thondaman and Upcountry People's Front Leader P. Chandrasekaran.

The mortal remains of Joseph Pararajasingham were laid to rest at the family plot in Batticaloa's Aalaidicholai burial grounds on Thursday 29, December 2005. The body lay in state at the theatre Subharaj owned by the family for the Batticaloa public to pay its respects. The funeral was held at the family residence on Lady Manning drive. The body was then taken in procession to the cemetery for the final farewell. □

Peace Group urges end to hostilities and direct talks

Jan 10 - Peace Support Group (PSG), a group consisting of civil society peace activists, expressed "deep sorrow and concern" at the escalation of violence in the NorthEast, reiterated the necessity to "return to direct talks as a matter of the utmost priority," and called upon the Government of Sri Lanka and Liberation Tigers "to affirm their commitment to the maintenance of law and order in the areas under their control, and take all steps to prevent a return to armed hostilities," in a press release issued in Colombo Monday, 9 January.

The signatories to this appeal are Sunila Abeyssekera, Sunil Bastian, Sunanda Deshapriya, Rohan Edrisinha, Kethesh Loganathan, Jehan Perera, Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, Jeevan Thiagarajah, Joe William, and Javed Yusuf

The full text of the appeal by the PSG is as follows:

The Peace Support Group expresses its deep sorrow and concern regarding the escalation of violence in the north and east in the past months. In the last 10 days, from December 25 to January 3, over 40 deaths that can be directly linked to the conflict have been reported from the north and east. These deaths include those of ordinary men, women and children, as well as those of MP Joseph Pararajasingham, members of the armed forces and Police and members of the LTTE. Most recently there was the LTTE suicide bomber attack against a fast attack naval craft in Trincomalee. Thirteen Navy personnel aboard the craft at the time of the attack are reported missing.

The killings and heightened level of armed activity inevitably generates a deep sense of fear and insecurity within the civilian population in these areas in particular, but throughout the country as well. Targeted assassinations as well as large-scale cordon and search operations that have taken place for example in Colombo, have also led to a growing sense of insecurity among Tamils in the south of

the country.

The inability of the state and of law enforcement authorities as well as of institutions such as the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, which has the specific mandate to monitor the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement, to initiate any intervention that could prevail on those responsible for these acts to desist from carrying out such acts of violence and violation of the right to life of citizens of Sri Lanka, marks a tragic peak in the culture of impunity in our country.

There is no doubt in our minds that it is only through a return to negotiations between the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE that the situation can take a turn for the better. It is in this arena that the finer points of implementing Article 2.1 regarding respect for human rights and Article 1.8 regarding paramilitary groups can be addressed in a manner that is conducive to the creation of a lasting and sustainable peace with justice in Sri Lanka. An expansion of the interpretation of the SLMM's mandate, which was described by UN Special Rapporteur on Summary and Arbitrary Executions as 'interpreted excessively narrowly', to include consideration of human rights violations including the deprivation of access to livelihoods of large numbers of inhabitants of the Jaffna peninsula due to the High Security Zones, could also be addressed within such a process.

Accordingly, PSG calls on:

* The GOSL and the LTTE, as signatories to the CFA, to affirm their commitment to the maintenance of law and order in the areas under their control, and take all steps to prevent a return to armed hostilities. We reiterate that this necessitates a return to direct talks as a matter of the utmost priority.

* The GOSL to expedite independent investigations into the rape and murder of Elaiyathamby Dharmini and the killing of 5 students in

Trincomalee allegedly by members of the security forces. As a necessary demonstration of its commitment to justice and rule of law we call on the government to publish the findings of these investigations and to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice.

The GOSL to ensure that in the conduct of its cordon and search operations, due respect for human rights and the rule of law is observed and that officers of the National Human Rights Commission are allowed access to individuals detained as a consequence of these operations.

We note that in the last month the LTTE and its front organizations have been engaged in acts of armed provocation against the security forces. We therefore call upon

* The LTTE to halt these acts of armed provocation and to commit to the pursuit of its objectives through non violent and democratic means.

* The LTTE, the Karuna forces and other actors in the North-East to immediately cease all attacks on each other's leaders, cadres and sympathizers and embark on a democratic and peaceful settlement of their differences.

We call on our fellow citizens to act with tolerance and dignity to take cognizance of the complex situation prevailing on the ground and display a commitment to principles of human rights and justice and co-existence in resolving these issues that affect the well-being of us all.

We ask that the international community do all that is in their power to strengthen the peace process by facilitating the resumption of peace talks as a first step towards a negotiated settlement of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

This is a moment in which the voices of all political and civic leaders should be raised against all forms of violence that pose a threat to democracy and sustainable development in Sri Lanka. As citizens of Sri Lanka who are committed to a lasting and just peace in our country, we call for courage and creativity in moving forward in the New Year in the spirit of consensus, and compromise. □

Murder in the Cathedral

Dr Devanesan Nesiah

We claim to be a deeply religious people, with 4 great world religions co-existing. It is true that Viharas, Temples, Mosques and Churches are often sited close to each other and worship goes on without friction. Unlike in many other countries in South and South East Asia and elsewhere, inter-religious riots are infrequent, of modest scale and localised, and quickly brought under control. In a crisis such as an ethnic riot or a sudden displacement in the wake of a natural disaster, those affected instinctively gravitate to places of worship, whether of their own religion or that of another, expecting and receiving protection and relief assistance. In this context, some recent developments are deeply disturbing.

The killing of the popular MP for Batticaloa, Joseph Pararajasingham, within St. Mary's Cathedral, even as the Bishop of Batticaloa was celebrat-

ing Christmas Mass, was particularly depraved. The motive may have been political, but the timing and venue reveal a level of callousness that would have been unthinkable till recent years. The killing of worshippers in the Grand Mosque at Akkaraipattu on 18th November 2005 is equally deplorable. Again, the motive may have been political, but the timing and venue indicate a similar level of callousness. So too, earlier acts of violence involving the desecration of Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian holy places in recent years.

It is not sought to attribute religious motives to such acts of terrorism. Indeed these must be seen in the context of the ongoing political violence of which they appear to be particularly obnoxious manifestations, and the ultimate remedy lies in addressing the political roots of the

problem. But finding political solutions may take a long time- years if not decades. In the meantime atrocities such as those referred to above, and the ongoing train of other political violence that appear to involve, at the very least, the state and the LTTE, may trigger a further escalation of the conflict that could inexorably lead to resumption of the civil war. We need a strong and effective institutional mechanism to promptly investigate each act of political terrorism (state, LTTE and other) and, wherever possible, attribute responsibility or even likely responsibility on the strength of the available evidence.

The functioning of the proposed institution will be unavoidably controversial. It is therefore essential that the structure and composition, and also powers and mandate, be such as to enable it to act quickly and effectively and, most important, with national and international credibility. Weakness in monitoring is a defect in the ceasefire agreement

(continued on next page)



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So, what is it in a venue? Everything and nothing

Sathya

The peace process, according to Norway and some Colombo-based peace advocates, has stalled over a seemingly trivial tussle between the Government (GoSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), over the venue for the recommencement of direct talk.

Yet another tussle as to whether the talks should concentrate on a "review" of the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA), as earlier posited by the GoSL, or on its "implementation", as maintained by the LTTE and Norway, has been resolved through some creative semantic juxtaposition that the talks should focus on the "review of the implementation of the ceasefire agreement". This phrasing by the Donor Co-Chairs in their statement of December 19, interestingly was also reflected in the Joint Statement that followed Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera's visit to India in early December where it said that "Minister Samaraweera emphasized the continued commitment of the government to the maintenance of the Ceasefire and the desire for a review of its operations, so that implementation of the agreement can be made more effective". This is indeed a welcome compromise to the futile review/revi-

(continued from page 17)

which needs to be remedied quickly.

The proposed institution, powers and mandate need the approval of the state, LTTE and other stakeholders. Pending such arrangements, which may unavoidably take some time, a Commission acceptable to the State, the LTTE and the Muslim Peace Secretariat could be immediately appointed to investigate and report within a very limited time frame on the Christmas day murder at St. Mary's Cathedral, the killings of 18 November at Akkaraipattu Grand Mosque, and the recent killing and alleged rape of the woman whose body was found in a well at Punguduthivu. If State, LTTE and Muslim Peace Secretariat approvals are not forthcoming, civil society could launch such an investigation. Time is of the essence. □

sion vs implementation debate that led nowhere.

It is therefore not difficult to envisage a situation where the issue over the venue would also be eventually resolved through a creative juxtaposition of the possible venue and an appropriate sequencing of the venues. This column seeks to reflect on this problematic.

But, before Sathya embarks on such a venture, the question needs to be posed whether the conflict over the venue is indeed trivial and unnecessary as Norway seems to imply in numerous statements, supported by our own peace advocates. It is Sathya's contention that as far as the parties (i.e. GoSL and LTTE) are concerned the issue of the venue is far from trivial and is a manifestation of the perennial contest between concerns over sovereignty by the State and the pursuit of legitimacy by the LTTE and will not simply fade away.

In the present context, it is clear that LTTE's insistence that the venue should be in Norway is aimed at rolling back the travel ban imposed on its delegations by the European Union (EU) and to neutralize any moves for the imposition of a total ban. And, by the same token, the insistence by the GoSL that the venue should not be in the European theatre is aimed precisely at checking the LTTE's strategy.

Further, by repeatedly stating that the venue for talks is not important, Norway appears to have conveniently forgotten the offer of Japan as a venue for talks by Japan's Special Envoy to Sri Lanka's Peace Process, Yashushi Akashi, who told a media briefing in Colombo on December 11 that the Japanese Government was willing to host the talks since, "the overnment told us that they are willing to be more flexible and agreed to hve negotiations outside the country, but in an Asian venue."

He further said, "I decided to comply with the wishes of the Government which is engaged in the strategy for peace including its relationship with the LTTE". Norway has also ignored the December 19 Statement of the Donor Co-Chairs which was

co-signed by Erik Solheim that "the Co-Chairs welcome the agreement of the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to hold immediate talks to review the implementation of the ceasefire agreement, and also welcome Japan's offer to host talks. They strongly urge both sides to start such talks without further delay or prevarication".

So, how come Norway has been repeatedly calling on the parties to put aside the issue of the venue and get down to talking? Is it because both Norway and the LTTE want the venue to be in Norway? Despite the pontification by Erik Solheim that the venue is not important, the issue remains as to where the parties are going to sit down and talk.

Certainly not on his lap! While the appearance of things are misleading, it does "appear" to Sathya that Norway is as adamant as the LTTE that the talks should take place in Oslo with the international community going along with this scheme of things. It also "appears" to Sathya that Norway and the international community, at the insistence of Norway, by turning a blind eye to the ongoing "undeclared war" by the LTTE by placing equal blame and responsibility on the GoSL and the LTTE, perhaps may be encouraging the LTTE to turn the screws even more through their deadly claymore mines, so that the Mahinda Rajapakse Government is brought down on its knees and the faces of their "sons of the soil" allies rubbed on the soil for having the audacity to relegating Europe to the background in its preference for Asia and for demonizing Norway in the election campaign.

But, leaving aside the appearance of things, how does one resolve the issue of the venue, which, to reiterate, is by no means trivial to the parties concerned?

Firstly, in resolving the issue it must be done in a manner that the party engaged in escalating violence and waging an undeclared war is not rewarded. In this context, it would be extremely difficult for any self-respecting government could agree to Norway as the venue under duress and at this particular juncture.

Further, it must be recognized that the Government did in fact make concessions by dropping its demand for the revision of the CFA and to go along with LTTE's position of talks relating to the implementation of the CFA, and in a third country. The ar-

gument by some peace advocates that the Government should go to Oslo if it is to avoid getting its security personnel blown sky high and to prevent war is akin to the LTTE strategy of holding the peace process hostage to the constant threats of war. This cannot be so and Norway may well be advised to recognize this, lest it be accused of using the LTTE as leverage to serve its own pride, prestige and influence that has got absolutely nothing to do with advancing the peace process.

However, in the interest of taking the peace process forward, the Government through Norway may convey to the LTTE its willingness to hold the second round of talks in Norway, following the first round to take place in Japan, provided all hostilities by the LTTE cease forthwith. The Government on its part, of course, should use whatever influence it has with Karuna to rein in the Karuna forces and ensure that attacks on the

LTTE leaders, cadres and sympathizers do not take place. The dastardly and cowardly assassination of Joseph Pararajasingham which incidentally is being portrayed in pro-Karuna websites in the same manner that the LTTE portray its victims (i.e. as "traitors" followed by a charge-sheet justifying the killing) is totally unacceptable.

If for any reason the above formula is not acceptable to the LTTE (and, by logical extension to Norway!), perhaps the opportune moment to break the deadlock is for representatives of the LTTE and the GoSL to sit down with Erik Solheim in "no man's land", during his scheduled visit towards the third week of January, to be followed by the immediate cessation of the on-going "undeclared war", including proxy killings. Thereafter, following a cooling-off period, talks may commence in Norway (or in South Africa as speculated in sections of the media and if found acceptable to the LTTE) which would enable the Government to claim that the LTTE had not been rewarded for the escalation of violence as a means of exerting pressure.

In sum, while the issue of the venue is by no means trivial to the parties concerned, it is not an issue that should be allowed to over-determine the need to arrest the escalation of violence and restart the peace process. So, what is it in a venue? Everything and Nothing! □

EU Commissioner's Call to 'arrest spread of violence'

Jan 12 - Mrs Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations, European Commission in a message delivered on 12 January said that in spite of the escalating violence "Sri Lanka's leaders may yet be able to build on to pull back from the brink: it is the profound desire of the people of Sri Lanka for peace," and added that "it is imperative that the government, other political parties and the Tamil Tigers heed the call of the people and join hands to arrest the spread of violence prevailing in the north and in the east."

Full text of the message from EU Commissioner follows:

As I commemorated the first anniversary of the tsunami on December 26, I was particularly saddened as I considered Sri Lanka's future - one year on after the terrible wave claimed 30,000 of its people, we may now be witnessing Sri Lanka's slow but resolute drift back towards civil war.

I hope I am wrong but the record in December is ominous. Over 60 soldiers have been killed and over 80 wounded in Sri Lanka. 21 suspected rebels have been killed. A leading Tamil parliamentarian was gunned down at Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. Human rights abuses continue. Civilians are being targeted or caught in the cross-fire. Extremists and so called "proxy groups" daily seek to pit Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims against each other. Last weekend, a suicide bomber sank a naval vessel in Trincomalee, killing a further 13 sailors. I share the fears expressed by Hagrup Haukland, head of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission: "If this trend of violence is allowed to continue, war may not be far away."

The contrast with Aceh, the other main victim of the tsunami, could not be more striking. The people of Indonesia found strength from the tragedy of the tsunami and have come together to start to resolve their 25 year old civil war. The tsunami in Sri

Lanka on the other hand has driven the people further apart - polarising differences between groups and creating conditions for more conflict, not peace.

But there is one optimistic note that Sri Lanka's leaders may yet be able to build on to pull back from the brink: it is the profound desire of the people of Sri Lanka for peace. The citizens of this beautiful country know better than any the horror of war, having lost 64,000 of their fellow countrymen in the last conflict - more than twice the number claimed by the tsunami. Indeed, we must not forget the over 100,000 displaced people who are still in camps, still waiting to return to their homes destroyed by the last war, and whose development needs are still long from being fully addressed.

It is imperative that the government, other political parties and the Tamil Tigers heed the call of the people and join hands to arrest the spread of violence prevailing in the north and in the east. It would quite simply be a tragedy if the various leaders involved failed to meet this basic demand of the people. For this reason, the debate that has now started over the venue for reviewing the implementation of the ceasefire agreement hardly inspires confidence. The state of the ceasefire is so perilous that Sri Lanka can ill afford to waste time on talks about the venue for talks! For all who truly seek settlement through negotiation rather than war, surely they have more urgent priorities.

The Tokyo Co-Chairs - a donor group comprising the US, EU, Japan and Norway that was set up in 2003 - met in December and sent similarly urgent messages for talks to start and violence to stop. India was associated with the meeting as well. I hosted that meeting and can vouch for the urgency of concern felt by all the countries around the table.

The Co-Chair group also underlined again the great international re-

solve to help Sri Lanka help itself. The renewed commitment of massive funding for the peace process and tsunami reconstruction already made available or through support of the peace process itself. Norway's tireless efforts in seeking to facilitate this peace process - and indeed the Co-Chairs resolute support to Norway in this role - are further credentials of the international community's desire to help.

Individually, the European Union through its Community budget is itself ready with further funding. Above and beyond the next Euro 50 million planned in 2006 for tsunami reconstruction, the Commission is ready to make a substantial multi-year pledge of grant aid for the conflict affected areas for a further seven years up to 2013, if the conditions locally permit us.

The European Union has recently also agreed a trade package for Sri Lanka. The "GSP Plus" status gives Sri Lanka's exports the most favourable low-duty access to the EU market of any Asian country. This gives a clear competitive edge to Sri Lanka's export industries and could boost growth and create tens of thousands of jobs. But such potential will be lost if the country decides to return to war.

The international community can offer help in form of trade and aid but cannot and should not seek to offer political solutions. Sri Lanka's political future lies solely in the hands of Sri Lanka's leaders themselves. They have to come from considering the legitimate aspirations of all communities and designing a way to live together. This is a time for courage and difficult decisions and a time that will reveal the real intentions and level of commitment of those assuming leadership on both sides.

To reinvest in peace may seem today a most difficult and tortuous route but it is Sri Lanka's only road to prosperity and stability in the long term. To turn to violence may appear to be the line of least resistance now but will prevent Sri Lanka from realising its economic potential, will cause massive human suffering again and ultimately will only delay the inevitable return to the negotiating table.

US wants 'cost of a return to war to be high'

In an address delivered to a gathering of the American Chamber of Commerce in Sri Lanka on January 9, the US Ambassador Jeffrey Lunst-ead, in setting out the 'US Policy Goals in Sri Lanka' for 2006 said, "The United States remains committed to the peace process in Sri Lanka, and in helping the legitimate governing bodies of Sri Lanka to prepare for their roles in developing and protecting their citizens. ... Let me be clear, our military assistance is not given because we anticipate or hope for a return to hostilities. We want peace. We support peace. And we will stand with the people of Sri Lanka who desire peace.... If the LTTE chooses to abandon peace, however, we want it to be clear, they will face a stronger, more capable and more determined Sri Lankan military. We want the cost of a return to war to be high.... The US will continue to support a strong, unified Sri Lanka that seeks peace and prosperity and that offers an atmosphere of respect and justice for all citizens regardless of religion and race. We will urge others in the International Community to do the same."

The following are excerpts from the US Ambassador's address:

"As has been the case since arriving here, our goals boil down to two simple, yet complementary themes: peace and prosperity.

I say they are complementary, be-

As I pondered Sri Lanka's future on December 26, I know what the tsunami victims and the victims of Sri Lanka's long and bloody conflict would demand from their leaders as a fitting memorial to their memories. They would want to see them renew their energies for peace and prosperity and not let the country sink back into another tragic episode of civil war. That is not only the commemoration that Sri Lanka's long list of victims would want if they could speak to us today but it is also what their memories so profoundly deserve. □

cause I don't think one can exist without the other.

Peace allows for increased economic activity and investment, which prompts greater prosperity, which further solidifies the desires for and benefits of peace.

It is a virtuous cycle. Unfortunately, the opposite vicious cycle can also happen.

In many of my discussions with you, either at large events such as this, or at our more informal "Sector Teas," I've focused on themes such as what business's role should be in laying a foundation for sound economic policy or the need for the private sector to take an activist role in supporting sound economic and public policies.

These points remain important and valid.

Today, however, there is an overriding theme that trumps all the others: Peace.

The peace process is paramount.

As we look at peace and prosperity, we are at a point in the cycle when the furtherance of peace is perhaps the single most important thing that can push Sri Lanka along the path to further prosperity.

A failure to capitalize on peace now will have significant negative repercussions in the months and years ahead. It will be especially bad for the economy and the underlying businesses that drive it.

Therefore, I think it critical that the business community take an abiding interest in the current status of the process.

You need to take an active role in both promoting the process and educating the country about the benefits of the processes' success or the consequences of its failure.

I just recently returned from Brussels where I participated in the co-chairs meeting.

What I was pleased to find in Brussels, was a continued optimism on the part of my fellow co-chair participants that, despite recent damage to the cease-

fire and the peace process, a strong hope for progress remains.

As we said in our statement: "The Co-Chairs note that Sri Lanka is facing a crucial choice between increased violence and re-invigorating the peace process. The prospects for long-term peace lie in the hands of the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE. The Sri Lankan people want peace. A failure to respond to this desire would be a tragic step backward."

We went on in our statement to outline those recent events and statements that we saw as useful and those that we saw as detrimental to the process.

In that vein, I have to take a moment here to congratulate the Government on its continued restraint, despite the recent provocative actions by the LTTE.

Similarly, the US calls on the LTTE to stop its violent activities and to return to the negotiating table with the Government of Sri Lanka in order to work towards a stable, permanent peace.

There can be a role for the LTTE in future development of Sri Lanka, but only if it returns to the peace table, renounces terrorism in word and deed and

become a responsible participant in Sri Lanka's future. And this will lead to a better life for the Tamils and all Sri Lankans in the North and East.

The LTTE's current actions call into question its "leadership" of the Tamil people.

What kinds of leaders block their people from realizing their most fundamental democratic aspirations? What kinds of leaders allow their people to continue to suffer from a lack of investment and industry? What kinds of leaders continue to pursue violence when the clear benefits of peace are obvious?

These are not acts of leadership. They directly undermine LTTE claims to legitimacy and they keep the aspirations of the Tamil people bottled up.

The United States remains committed to the peace process in Sri Lanka, and in helping the legitimate governing bodies of Sri Lanka to prepare for their roles in developing and protecting their citizens.

Through our USAID program, we are helping to increase the competitiveness of Sri Lankan industries, we are helping Sri Lanka rebuild after the tsunami, and we are supporting efforts to help people realize the benefits of peace.

Through our military training and assistance programs, including efforts to help with counterterrorism initiatives and block illegal financial transactions, we are helping to shape the ability of the Sri Lankan Government to protect its people and defend its interests.

Let me be clear, our military assistance is not given because we anticipate or hope for a return to hostilities. We want peace. We support peace. And we will stand with the people of Sri Lanka

who desire peace.

If the LTTE chooses to abandon peace, however, we want it to be clear, they will face a stronger, more capable and more determined Sri Lankan military. We want the cost of a return to war to be high.

Now you may be asking, why is the American Ambassador using such blunt language at a gathering of the business elite? What has this got to do with our businesses or our interests?

As I said in the beginning, it is imperative that the business community become seized with the peace process. For the peace and prosperity message to take hold, people need to understand better the prosperity element.

Just as the US has found that post-9/11 security measures have imposed costs and restraints on some businesses, the Sri Lankan business community must clearly outline the benefits that have accrued since the peace process began, and clearly outline the potential pitfalls of the absence of peace.

Now then, while Peace is critical and the top priority, I don't want to leave other prosperity issues unattended.

On this front, Government has a clear choice and needs to establish an economic framework to help it foster peace and quickly realize the maximum gains from even the smallest peace initiatives."

Having set out the elements of such a framework, the US Ambassador then went on to say as follow:

"Sri Lanka is at a tricky point in its history. It's not clear if it is at a crossroads, or a cliff's edge.

The US will continue to support a strong, unified Sri Lanka that seeks peace and prosperity and that offers an atmosphere of respect and justice for all citizens regardless of religion and race. We will urge others in the International Community to do the same.

We have stood with Sri Lanka through the peace process as one of the co-chairs. We are standing with Sri Lanka through the rebuilding process from the tsunami. And we want to stand with Sri Lanka as it crosses the threshold from a situation of "no war" to one of peace and moves from a platform of low economic growth to a launching pad of economic dynamism.

I see the role of the business community and other civil society players as critical in these endeavours." □

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Relying on stealth

LTTE adopts a new combat strategy in north-eastern Sri Lanka in which its front organisations stage violent attacks on chosen targets.

D B S Jeyaraj

RECENT developments in the Tamil-majority regions of north-eastern Sri Lanka indicate that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has embarked upon a fresh, multi-pronged combative strategy against the government headed by President Mahinda Rajapakse. While not resorting to open war, the Tigers are, through a series of overt and covert manoeuvres, increasing the pressure on the armed forces stationed in the north-eastern areas. It appears that the LTTE has commenced hostilities under the guise of a "people's war", which resembles in parts the Palestinian intifada and the Iraqi resistance.

The LTTE found it problematic to resume war in a situation where Chandrika Kumaratunga as President and Ranil Wickremesinghe as Prime Minister were willing to negotiate a federal alternative. The LTTE delayed engaging in direct talks to explore federalism as stipulated in the November 2002 Oslo Accord and came under immense international pressure to resume negotiations. The end of Chandrika Kumaratunga's term gave the LTTE a new opportunity, as her chosen successor to contest the presidency, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse, had entirely different views on how to deal with the ethnic conflict.

He aligned with parties that adopted a hard line on the national question, such as the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU). A major consequence of this political re-configuration was that Rajapakse reversed the paradigmatic shift from unitarianism towards federalism in Sri Lankan politics. Rajapakse stood for a unitary state as opposed to the federal option advocated by his chief opponent Wickremesinghe. Many observers feared that war was a distinct possibility in the event of Rajapakse's victory.

The election campaign saw a polarisation of forces, with the bulk of Sinhala voters supporting Rajapakse and the minority communities overwhelmingly supporting Wickremesinghe. In the circumstances, Sri Lankan Tamils were ex-

pected to vote in large numbers for Wickremesinghe. However, the LTTE intervened at this juncture, calling for a boycott of elections through its front organisations. Even some violence was used to intimidate people. This "enforced" boycott saw a large drop in votes polled in the north-eastern Tamil areas. As a result, Wickremesinghe lost to Rajapakse by around 487,000 votes. It was clear that the LTTE wanted Rajapakse to win. Rajapakse, in his policy declaration, reiterated some of his hard line policies on the ethnic question.

V. Prabakaran, the LTTE chief, in his Great Heroes Day address on November 27, acknowledged that a hiatus existed between the policies of Rajapakse and the LTTE. Prabakaran, however, referred to Rajapakse as a practical man with political pragmatism and stated that he was prepared to give time until next year (2006) for the President to take conflict-resolution steps. It appeared that immediate war was not on the cards and that there was time and space for meaningful action on the peace front.

But this was not to be. Using the killing of two Tiger supporters, allegedly by members of Tamil "paramilitary forces", as a reason, a great deal of civil unrest was promoted in Jaffna. The police and the armed forces were the targets of systematic attacks. There were incidents of shooting, bomb-throwing, grenade-launching and landmine explosions. Attacks also commenced in areas outside Jaffna, such as Mannar, Vavuniya and Trincomalee. These sparked a backlash, with soldiers and policemen retaliating against civilians in many places. The situation is tense and uncertain.

The unfolding pattern of events suggests that the ongoing violence is not a random one, and notwithstanding denials, the hand of the LTTE is discernible. The LTTE, without resuming open war, seems to have adopted a new combative strategy.

The LTTE alleged that attacks by government-sponsored "paramilitary forces" were posing a security threat and

shut down its political offices in the government-controlled areas. Thus it has no "official" presence in government-controlled regions, including Jaffna town. Members of its intelligence wing and assassination squads, however, maintain an active, yet clandestine, presence. These people are in communication with their superiors in the Tiger-controlled areas, who direct and supervise the "shadow war".

The war is termed makkal yutham (people's war) and is undertaken by a front outfit of the LTTE, loosely termed Makkal Padai or People's Force. Members of this force are "technically" not a part of the LTTE but are aligned to it as a civilian militia. Members of this militia have obtained various levels of combat training from the LTTE and any of them killed in action is given the Maaveerar or "Great Hero" status as acknowledged Tiger "martyrs".

This force consists of two segments. One is of people who returned to the Jaffna peninsula from the LTTE-controlled Wannai northern mainland after the ceasefire. Many of these people, particularly the younger ones, have got Tiger training.

The second consists of people living in Jaffna who have undergone Tiger training during the post-ceasefire period. Apparently, members of this group were trained in LTTE-controlled areas in the lower peninsula and Kilinochchi at different times. Despite living in government-controlled areas for many years, these people opted to go for training with the LTTE. According to recent estimates, 15,000-17,000 "civilians" have obtained such training.

While an element of coercion cannot be ruled out, that is not the sole explanation for this phenomenon. The LTTE has conducted similar exercises in other parts of the north-eastern region too. While the exact figures are not available, it is reasonable to conclude that 8,000-10,000 people obtained such training. An unknown factor is the impact of the 'Col.' Karuna rebellion on this development in the east.

While most people so trained remain dormant, some, particularly of the younger generation, are involved in the violence against the armed forces in the north. If the 1980s saw militants moving about on bicycles in the peninsula, the new-generation rebels move around on motorcycles and use cellular phones for communication. The LTTE has a motor-

cycle brigade of its own and many of its members have received special training; young men on motorcycles were behind most of the incidents of shooting and grenade-throwing.

Officially, the LTTE says it has nothing to do with the violence. The Tigers claim that the "oppressed people of Jaffna" are rising spontaneously against the "army of occupation". The attacks in different parts of the area are, according to LTTE political Commissar Suppiah Paramu Thamilselvan, committed by isolated groups of "infuriated" people. This was the "official" version he trotted out to representatives of the four peace-process co-chairs at a recent meeting in Kilinochchi. It is, however, believed that LTTE cadres provide guidance and logistical support to the Makkal Padai.

Though attempts have been made to demonstrate the spontaneous and fragmented nature of the violence, some centralised control is suspected. Various front groups make statements to prove that multiple forces are at work. Despite this "decentralisation", the presence of an overall power directing events can be gauged. There is also the case of sophistication in the attacks, in the use of Claymore mines and RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) launchers, which betrays a Tiger hand.

The second "front" opened by the LTTE in Jaffna is the deployment of student power. In a manner similar to the Palestinian intifada uprisings, Jaffna's students have commenced sporadic demonstrations protesting against the army "occupation" of Jaffna. While the police and the armed forces have reacted with ferocity to these demonstrations, the students themselves have displayed great tenacity in withstanding the repression. To stifle the protests, the police routinely open fire, use teargas, resort to lathi charge and assault with rifles and poles.

Jaffna University at Thirunelvely was in the eye of a storm after soldiers attacked teachers and students attempting to go in a procession to the Ceasefire Monitors' office. Soldiers defied convention and entered the university campus on another occasion and assaulted students. It is well known that the students are not acting entirely independently and that the LTTE and pro-Tiger activists are behind the dissent and protests. A key figure is Selvakumar Gajendran, president of the International Tamil Student Fed-

eration and Member of Parliament from the Tamil National Alliance (TNA). It is suspected that "non-students" in school uniform also participated in the protests.

The presence of the army in some schools and public buildings is apparently a motivating factor for these protesters. Also, the setting up of security zones and their expansion have displaced many people. Nineteen per cent of the total land area and 42 per cent of the coastline in the peninsula are in security zones.

The 2002 ceasefire agreement stipulated that the armed forces should withdraw in a phased manner, but the then Jaffna commander, Gen. Sarath Fonseka, insisted on the disarmament of the LTTE before such a withdrawal. This caused much heartburning among the ordinary people of Jaffna. Fonseka is the Army Commander now and the student protests, during which his effigy was burnt, coincided with his assumption of office.

The LTTE has galvanised protests and dissent against this backdrop of security zones and the resultant displacement. The civilian front and the student organisations propagate the slogan "Velieru Allathu Veliettruvom" (Get out or be ousted) against the armed forces in Jaffna. The earlier mass demonstrations titled "Pongu Tamil" (Tamil upsurge) also provide precedents for staging protests.

The LTTE's strategy of combining sporadic attacks with mass demonstrations has transformed the socio-political climate of Jaffna. It is almost like a prelude to open war. According to some insiders, the idea is to increase the pressure on the armed forces through scattered attacks and demonstrations in the name of "enraged" people. If the armed forces succumb to the pressure and go on the rampage, resulting in big civilian casualties, that may provide the LTTE the opportunistic reason to go to war.

In the meantime, the attacks of the "People's Force" have had five significant effects. One, the armed forces are retaliating forcefully against genuine civilians. This is causing much resentment and it is almost a throwback to the 1980s when the armed forces retaliated against Tamil civilians and alienated them further. Any goodwill built in the years of ceasefire is rapidly eroding.

Second is that soldiers from the heavily fortified camps are being re-deployed throughout the peninsula. This is resulting in a thinning out of personnel. At the same time the number of vulnerable tar-

gets is increasing and soldier morale is being undermined.

Third, personnel from other areas are being moved to Jaffna. Attacks, however, have begun in other areas, too, increasing the vulnerability of the already stretched armed forces.

Fourth, the continuing attacks on soldiers in Jaffna exposes the tenuous nature of their presence despite being stationed there for many years. The publicity surrounding the attacks and protests helps portray the armed forces in a negative light as "forces of occupation".

Fifth is the evidence that the "dirty war" is escalating. The murder of Batticaloa TNA Member of Parliament Joseph Pararajasingham in the Batticaloa St. Mary's Cathedral on Christmas day is one example. He was perceived as being pro-LTTE. The brutal execution of five Tamil youths in Trincomalee is another example. The state begins to lose the moral high ground.

If and when open war breaks out, it is a moot point what the LTTE's immediate military priorities would be. It may be Jaffna peninsula, the Welioya complex, Trincomalee or targets in the south. But if the objective is the over-running of Jaffna, the current strategy of fomenting a "people's war" is ideally suited for that.

When the real fighting starts, the soldiers in Jaffna will face threats externally and internally. The LTTE has succeeded in creating a powerful fifth column in Jaffna, behind the army lines, along the Kilaly-Eluthumadduval-Nagarkovil axis. While LTTE cadre may launch a frontal assault in the lower peninsula, the powerful fifth column could commence a series of attacks within army-controlled territory. Troop mobility could be restricted severely and internal supply routes could be blocked. The use of heavy artillery in such a situation could cause immense harm to genuine civilians and their habitats. This is bound to help the LTTE in its propaganda against the government.

The Sri Lankan government, therefore, is sitting on the edge of a rumbling volcano. The current violence in the name of a "people's war" is not merely a simplistic device to provoke the government into declaring war. It goes much beyond that and the Mahinda Rajapakse regime is yet to wake up to the complex realities of this combative strategy of the LTTE.

(Frontline 14 Jan 2006)

War drums are beating

Dr Kumar Rupesinghe

Given the escalation of violence in the North East, I suggest the following steps to be taken by the Government of Sri Lanka.

- * The Norwegian Facilitators to be asked to visit Sri Lanka immediately.
- * The SLMM be asked to convene a meeting of the military and the LTTE for talks on de-escalation of the tensions prevailing in the North East.
- * Take immediate steps to start discussions on the Ceasefire Agreement.

There is no doubt that war drums are beating in the North East of Sri Lanka. The evidence is clear. Within days of the President assuming office 16 soldiers were killed in claymore mine attacks. In another attack in Pesalai over 13 Navy personnel have been killed (The figures may increase). Immediately after the election a Mosque in Akkaraipattu was attacked with hand grenades and four were killed and many injured. Three Sri Lankan Navy personnel were killed by the LTTE in the seas of Mannar.

Hostilities between the Karuna faction and the LTTE have intensified. Further reports indicate that in Jaffna a people's uprising is being planned and that large numbers of hand grenades and light weapons have been distributed to the people in Jaffna. The total number of killings in the Eastern Province after the presidential election was 49. The total number of killings in the North is currently 41. The grand total stands at 90 as at 23rd December 2005.

Meanwhile, the President has appointed Sarath Fonseka as the Commander in Chief of the armed forces. The Commander has asked for three months to reorganize the army and be prepared for any form of hostilities by the LTTE.

The appointment of the hawkish Ratnasiri Wickremnayake as the Deputy Minister of Defence, the appointment of the President's brother as the Secretary of Defence, the appointment of Kotakadeniya, the dreaded former DIG and treasurer of the JHU, as an advisor on Police affairs also suggests that the President is appointing hardliners into the defence establishment. As a sequel to Kotakadeniya's appointment search op-

erations are underway for suspected terrorists in Colombo.

Do these moves mean a preparation for the resumption of war? I would like to pursue this question in some detail and suggest that a resumption of war will destroy the semblance of normality that has been achieved through the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) and will take the country back into a cycle of violence, economic bankruptcy, and once again encourage an atmosphere of fear and despair amongst the people.

At a glance what seems to be happening is that both sides feel that they have to restore military equilibrium, which both parties feel has been lost during the period of the Ceasefire. As far as the LTTE is concerned its recent statements indicate that they feel that the UNF peace process was a peace trap where the UNF government was manipulating the international community to create a safety net, which would encircle the LTTE militarily and politically. The LTTE spokespersons suggest that the UNF government was engaged in a cleverly manipulated encirclement campaign where maximum pressure would be brought to bear on the LTTE towards compliance with the Colombo agenda. The key features of this encirclement campaign according to them are as follows:

1. Diplomatically, to pressure the LTTE to comply with human rights standards and imposing certain conditionalities that would be the basis of renewed assistance to the North East. These conditionalities were eloquently amplified in the Tokyo donor conference. It is their view that the UNF government encouraged the banning of the LTTE in various capitals so as to leverage the LTTE into compliance.

2. Militarily to create a safety net where the United States and India but also some of the bi-lateral donors would enter a military alliance to ensure that Sri Lanka's sovereignty would be secured in case of the resumption of hostilities. Discussions with the Indian Government to come to a defence agreement with India were pursued with some vigour by the

UNF government. Further discussions with the US were symbolized when one peace negotiator who was central to the negotiations was seen photographed with a war ship gifted by the USA. These symbolic gestures were to assuage the Sinhalese community that the government was seeking military guarantees. India has however not signed the defence agreement and it is not likely given the support necessary for the Congress party from its southern allies.

3. Politically the UNF government strategy was to ensure that the CFA would provide sufficient momentum, which would enable war weary combatants to eschew war and turn towards peaceful occupations. Once again this point was exemplified during the elections when Moragoda stated that the Karuna phenomenon was precisely a result of the Ceasefire Agreement. 4. The allegation is the Government through its military was engaged in a proxy war against the LTTE by encouraging auxiliary forces including the Karuna faction with the connivance of the Military.

5. In terms of humanitarian relief to the war weary population no proper mechanisms were created to ensure that rehabilitation and reconstruction took place.

6. Historically, that all Sri Lankan governments had failed to deliver anything of substance to the Tamil speaking people.

It was based on the above premises that the LTTE decided that negotiations with the UNF in the future would be the same as before and would further ensnare the LTTE into a peace trap where their freedom for maneuver would be severely restricted. A Mahinda Rajapakse Presidency was to clear the terrain, where they felt that the President would represent Sinhalese and chauvinist interests, stand firm on a unitary state, and would be compelled to pursue a war agenda. Why does the South feel the equilibrium has been lost?

The election of President Rajapakse demonstrates clearly that the southern voter had been disenchanted with the CFA particularly with the rate of political killings and child abductions. The Sri Lankan armed forces felt that the former President had demoralized the armed forces and that proper procurement of arms did not take place. The military also felt that the CFA helped the LTTE.

The suggestion that the LTTE would

resume military hostilities in 2006 is already a reality on the ground. Some are arguing that the LTTE escalation of violent conflict may be a prelude to seeking concessions from the government, as a sequel to restarting the talks on the CFA. If this is so then the LTTE is employing a high-risk strategy, which could boomerang on them. If it is a prelude to open hostilities then it means that the LTTE thinks that it would secure a quick military victory before resuming talks again once the equilibrium is restored. If we examine this scenario then, it is clear that the LTTE would wish to gain control over the Jaffna Peninsula through a people's struggle through an Intifada type operation where civilians will take the lead in demanding that the military forces leave Jaffna. The civil uprising would be backed by long-range missile attacks by the LTTE to take over the airport. Unlike the Intifada however, the young people it seems are not equipped with stones but hand grenades! Such a people's uprising would be followed by selected military attacks, which would hold the military in captivity. It is also argued that simultaneously selective attacks would take place in Colombo.

It is my argument that if the LTTE chooses this course of action then it would face serious consequences which it should take note of. In the last twenty years or so the numbers of civil wars in the world has dropped from about 32 in the 80s to about 19 which is a dramatic drop in warfare. This figure includes the hostilities in Iraq and Afghanistan. One of the reasons for this decline is that in some case the so-called Liberation Movements have been defeated militarily.

The other is that guerilla movements successfully adapted to the changing international environment and joined the mainstream democratic movements. The most impressive example of outright military defeat is the defeat of the Sandero Luminoso movement in Peru, where the government eventually encircled the movement and destroyed the entire organization. Another example near home is the plight of the JVP when they launched two insurgencies in 1971 and 1987 where on both occasions they were defeated and crushed. In most of these cases the insurgents lost because they resorted primarily to military means and terror to maintain themselves.

Other insurgent and guerilla move-

ments pursued political goals through multi-faced stratagems and eventually entered the democratic mainstream. A good example is the African National Congress which adapted to the dynamics of the situation in South Africa and internationally and adopted not merely guerilla tactics but civil disobedience campaigns, trade union action and peaceful forms of struggle. They realized that the form of struggle was important in reaching ones objectives and that reconciliation with the enemy was essential to rebuild South Africa. Another example is Northern Ireland where the Irish Republican Army (IRA) was engaged in a protracted war with the British Government.

The tactics they adopted was the use of selective terror but at the same time they encouraged the formation of a political party, the Sein Fein, which was engaged in the democratic struggle in parliament. It was the twin strategy of selective terror and politics, which eventually led them to enter the mainstream and eventually agree to the decommissioning of weapons. There are many such examples where guerilla movements entered the democratic mainstream through tactical and strategic decisions.

The LTTE does not correspond to either of the examples. It is not a defeated movement neither does it adopt multifaceted stratagems to pursue its goals. If we examine the evolution of the LTTE it is clear that they had adopted a military politico stratagem to achieve their objectives. Throughout the course of its history it has eliminated all other militant organizations, and has won most of the battles against the Sri Lankan government. But often military defeat on the ground was avoided by the use of clever stratagems. A good example is the war between the LTTE and the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF).

Here the LTTE was weakened by the assaults of the IPKF and their forces were pushed back to the Wannai. However the LTTE maneuvered politically and got President Premadasa to get the IPKF out of Sri Lanka. The war for peace strategy adopted by President Chandrika Kumaratunga was disastrous for the Sri Lankan Government in that it failed to weaken the LTTE. The LTTE won many major battles with the Sri Lankan forces, acquired massive arms from the arsenals of the Sri Lankan armed forces and had developed a formidable military prow-

ess with a conventional army, navy, a guerilla force and suicide squads using human missiles for selective assassinations. Because of these military victories the LTTE has concluded that it is only its military strength, which will enable them to win their demands.

The structure of the organization is based on the primacy of the intelligence department, then the military department, then the development department and the political arm comes a bad fourth in the order of priorities. Decisions are usually taken by the Leadership, with close consultations with the intelligence and military wings of the organization. The so-called political wing in Killinochchi and London usually play a secondary role. The LTTE has so far not developed its own political formation but intends to use the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) as its proxy in Parliament.

Although the LTTE has the military ability to achieve some of its objectives, a military adventure to reach its objectives would have serious consequences for itself and for the country as a whole. The Government whilst weak militarily has accumulated goodwill within the international community, and India would not allow such an adventure. The government would naturally try to develop a broad anti terrorist alliance amongst India and the Western powers. Such are the dreams of those who seek to advise the President.

The Sri Lankan Government on the other hand would also make a profound mistake in thinking that an easy victory would be possible with the LTTE. The military always underestimated the strength of the LTTE. The fact that the army was not allowed to meet the LTTE to reduce tensions is regrettable since it has been standard practice over many years. So far the President has not invited the Norwegians to visit the country although they have been waiting for such an invitation. Surely the Norwegians should be asked to meet the leader of the LTTE and the President.

The SLMM had over the years facilitated the military from both sides. These talks should be resumed immediately. There has been too much delay in resuming talks on the CFA. High priority should be given to start these talks. All efforts must be made to reduce the continued escalation of violence. This is the need of the hour. □

“Roaring Tamil Force” warns of further attacks: Dec 15 - If the increasing incidents of rounding up of civilians, and cordon and search of Tamil areas by the Army continue, campaign of attacks against SLA would intensify in Jaffna, warned an organization called “Roaring Tamil Force”, in a memorandum submitted to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) offices in Jaffna Thursday (15). Twenty-five youths reportedly identifying themselves as belonging to the Group delivered the memorandum at the Temple Road offices of the SLMM, sources said. Admitting responsibility for the recent attacks against the SLA in Jaffna district, the Group’s memorandum further demanded that security forces must return to their barracks without interfering with peoples’ daily activities and disturbing normalcy of life in the district, and that construction of new SLA checkpoints and camps should be stopped.

NEWS TRACK

three SLN boats enroute to Pallimunai camp in the Mannar town. The attackers have abducted three SLN soldiers with their patrol boat, Mannar Police said. A Tamil fisherman Mr.P.Rukman, 25, was also injured in the

incident. The attackers had fired at the SLN boats from the shore of Pallimunai when the boats were returning to the SLN camp after completing night patrol in the Mannar seas. The boats were 200 meters away from the shore when they were attacked.

The soldiers who launched a cordon and search operation in the areas Pallimunai, Bazaar, Sinnakadai and Uppukulam, were seen attacking the civilian travellers on the streets in Mannar following the incident. All shops and public institutions were immediately closed down due to the tense situation prevailing in Mannar, the sources added.

Rally against abduction in Vavuniya: Dec 18 - Around 2,000 members and supporters of the Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) on Thursday (15) took to the streets in the norther city of Vavuniya shouting slogans demanding the release of their senior member S Ganeshalingam, alias Farook, who the party accuses the LTTE of having abducted on last Monday 12 December. The protesters handed over a memorandum to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) officials in Vairapuliaynkulam asking for their intervention. But the SLMM efforts to secure his release had proved futile.

Civilians injured as attacks on soldiers escalate: Dec 22 -

Four civilians were seriously injured when suspected Tamil Tigers and soldiers exchanged gunfire for more than five minutes at Ainthusanthi, a junction in the outer suburb of Jaffna town, around 4:30 p.m. Thursday (22). Grenade attacks were reported in Ariyalai and near Nachimar Temple in Jaffna. A policeman was wounded at Kantharmadam junction, 300 meters away from the University of Jaffna, around 1:00 p.m., when attackers launched an attack on soldiers. An Army vehicle narrowly escaped a claymore attack in Nellyyadi in Vadamardchi around 5:30 a.m. Thursday morning. Following these incidents, a heightened a tense situation in Jaffna. Ainthusanthi incident was triggered when gunmen waiting in ambush attacked a bus carrying SLA soldiers in KKS road near the Ainthusanthi junction less than 150 meters from Jaffna town. SLA soldiers stationed in Ainthusanthi rushed to the scene and joined the ensuing firefight. Thevaratnam Maheswaran (31), Francis Xavier Anustan (28), I. Nishanthan (28), and K. Theivendram (38) who were injured in the firefight were admitted to Jaffna Teaching Hospital. Earlier, on Wednesday (21) night, four policemen were wounded when attackers lobbed grenades at the Police station in Kopay. Sri Lanka Army has intensified its street patrols in Jaffna following the escalation of attacks on Sri Lanka Army.

Woman raped before murder: Jan 20 - Twenty-years old Ilayathamby Tharshini whose body was recovered from an abandoned well in Punguduthivu Saturday (17), was raped before being strangled to death, according to postmortem examination conducted in the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. Dr.Balasubramaniam, Judicial Medical Officer, who conducted the postmortem examination later handed over the medical report to the Kayts Police. According to the report several injuries were caused by fingernails and biting had been found on several areas of her body. The funeral of Tharshini was held Monday (19). The deceased was reported missing on Friday (16) and on Saturday her naked body tied to a stone was recovered from a well located close to the Sri Lanka Navy camp in Punguduthivu. The body was handed over to the mortuary of the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. Meanwhile, officials of the Jaffna regional office of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka reportedly held an inquiry into this incident in the house of the victim.

LTTE activist gunned down: Dec 22 - Unidentified gunmen shot dead LTTE activist K. Navaratnam in Jaffna. The 47-year Jaffna district organizer for the Tamil Resurgence Task Force, a known LTTE front, was gunned down opposite the Thinakural offices along the KKS road in Jaffna town at about 5.30 a.m. Thursday (22), police said. He worked part-time as newspaper distributor and had gone to collect Thinakural edition for delivery to Poopalasingham Book Shop located on the Hospital Road when he was shot. Kopay district organizer for the Tamil Resurgence Task Force and Principal of Kopay Christian College, Sivakadacham, was shot dead last October. The LTTE has accused the military of carrying out the killings.

Corporal killed, six soldiers injured: Dec 21 - An Corporal was killed and six soldiers including two SLA majors were injured when suspected Tamil Tigers ambushed a military vehicle along Kachchai-Kilali road in Thenmaradchy at 6.30 p.m. Wednesday (21). Gunmen reportedly used light machine guns and grenades in the attack. Three soldiers were injured in two other grenade attacks in Ariyalai and Kalviyankadu. In another incident in Jaffna, one soldier was injured when assailants hurled a grenade at the Ariyalai Mambalam junction at 5.30 a.m. In a second grenade attack Wednesday 5.45 p.m. aimed at the troops manning the model market in Kalviyankadu located on the Jaffna Point Pedro road two SLA soldiers were injured.

Mannar LTTE office burnt down: Dec 23 - The office of the LTTE Mannar district administrative unit was found early morning burnt and damaged by unidentified persons on Friday (23). This office is located along Moor Street in Mannar town. The office was in an abandoned state following the withdrawal of LTTE political activists from the government-controlled area few months ago due to security

SLN boats attacked in Mannar: Dec 22 - A soldier of the Sri Lanka Navy Mr.S.G.T.Sanjeeva, 23, was injured Thursday (22) morning around 7.30 a.m. when suspected Tamil Tigers fired at

Woman shot dead, father wounded: Dec 23 - Unidentified gunmen who entered a house to abduct a young man in Chenkalady opened fire inside his house as the family members spoiled the attempted abduction. The angered gunmen, armed with a T-56 rifle, shot and killed the sister of the youth, Eravur Police said. The victim’s father was wounded in the incident that took place

inside the house located on Boundary Road in Chenkalady, 13 km north of Batticaloa town, on Thursday (22) around 9:00 p.m. Vallinayagi Thambirajah, 18, was killed on the spot and her father Kandasamy Thambirajah, 51, wounded in his legs, was rushed to Batticaloa Hospital.

Fifteen SLN troopers killed in Claymore attack: Dec 23 - In a Claymore attack by suspected Tamil Tigers, fifteen Sri Lanka Navy sailors were killed and more than fifteen sailors were wounded on their bus in Pesalai 15 km northwest of Mannar around 1:30 p.m. Friday (23). The vehicle, a bus, sustained heavy damage and has burned down. The explosion took place at Thullukudiyiruppu near Pesalai close to a housing scheme. At least four sailors were rushed to Mannar Hospital, medical sources said. One trooper succumbed to his wounds at the hospital. The wounded soldiers were airlifted to Anuradhapura Hospital. The navy troopers were on their way to their base in Talaimannar when their bus was attacked.

Grenade attacks on army sentry points: Dec 23 - Suspected Tamil Tigers on Friday (23) morning around 5.30 a.m. lobbed a grenade at the Army checkpoint located along the sea shore near Katkivalam in Vadamarachchi-Point Pedro area in Jaffna district. One soldier was reported injured. Large number of government troops were rushed to the Katkivalam site after the attack. They began search operation blocking all public and traffic movements. In another similar attack one soldier was injured when a grenade was lobbed at the army sentry point located at Ramavil area between Kodikamam and Puttur in Jaffna district. During the search operation soldiers recovered a live claymore mine.

Chavakachcheri police post comes under attack: Dec 23 - Chavakachcheri police post in Thenmaradchy in Jaffna district came under suspected Tamil Tiger grenade attack and small-arms fire at 8.30 p.m. on Thursday (22). Police returned fire from their positions inside the Police station premises and the firefight reported lasted for more than 15 minutes. Additional reinforcements of troops rushed to the Kodikamam-Kachchai road area where the police post is located but the gunmen had vacated the area by then. In another incident on the same day, at around 8.30 p.m. the Police Post located in front of the Old Bus Stand at entrance to the High Security Zone (HSZ) in Point Pedro, also came under grenade attack. In the general search of houses in Kachchai, Chavakachcheri area Thursday morning, the Kodikamam Police arrested two civilians accused of hiding hand grenades in their homes. The arrested were produced in Chavakachcheri court in the afternoon.

28 wounded in revenge attack: Jan 23 - Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) soldiers Friday (23) evening around 5:30 p.m. entered the settlement of Internally Displaced People (IDP), the Victoria Hundred Houses scheme, and attacked the civilians with batons, bike-chains and shoes after tying their hands and legs. Eleven persons, 9 males and 2 females, were admitted to the Peripheral Medical unit in Pesalai and two men requiring further medical care were rushed to Mannar General Hospital. Another 15 persons, with minor injuries, have returned after treatment at OPD (Out Patients Department), medical sources said. Meanwhile, more than 100 families living along Talaimannar-Pesalai Road have moved into the Vetrinmatha Church in Pesalai for safety. The housing settlement is located at Thullukudiyiruppu in Pesalai, 200 meters from the ambush site where more than 15 SLN personnel were killed in a Claymore mine attack by the Tamil Tigers on Friday (23) afternoon.

Woman succumbs to gunshot wounds: Dec 24 - Ms Markandu Pushpamalar (31), also known as Malar, who was injured when Sri Lanka Army (SLA) fired in retaliation following a grenade attack on their check post in Chavakachcheri Friday (23) 1.30 p.m.,

succumbed to injuries at the Jaffna Teaching Hospital Saturday(24) morning. Hospital sources said that Ms Pushpamalar had three serious bullet wounds that damaged internal organs and surgery failed to save her life.

Mr Rajathurai, the second civilian injured during the same incident, is still recovering at the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. The grenade attack took place on the SLA sentry located near the Multipurpose Cooperative building in Chavakachcheri.

Firefights in Point Pedro, Thavadu: Dec 24 - Suspected LTTE assailants hurled hand grenades and fired at the Army post guarding the Northern Regional Bus Depot located at 1 km from Point Pedro town on the Pt Pedro-Jaffna road at 9 p.m. on Friday (23). The Army returned fire and the firefight reportedly continued for more than five minutes. A similar grenade attack at the SLA checkpoint and firefight took place around the same time near Thavadu, Jaffna along KKS road 4 km north of Jaffna town. No injuries were reported from either incident.

Mannar fisherman abducted: Dec 24 - Ms Vigneswary (29) of Vankalai Saturday (24) reportedly complained to the Mannar Citizen Committee that the whereabouts of her husband, Nadarajah Yogeswaran (33), was abducted by a group of ten armed masked men on the previous day from her home. She has sought the assistance of the Mannar Citizens Committee to trace him, sources said. According to her complaint, her husband is a fisherman by profession. Ten armed masked men speaking fluent Sinhala had entered her house, beaten her husband, and had taken him with them. She said her husband has not returned home after the abduction.

Civilians burnt to death in Pesalai: Dec 25 - Remains of burnt bodies including a four-year-old boy were discovered inside a house of the Victoria Hundred Houses resettlement in Pesalai on Sunday (25) at 10:30 a.m. by residents who reached the site for the first time following Friday's (23) revenge attacks on the civilians by the Sri Lanka Navy (SLN). Soldiers blocked residents from searching for two other missing persons in parts of surrounding area. Three houses and a shop were burnt and almost all the houses were found looted. The victims were burnt using kajan leaves and palmyrah stems, sources said. The exact number of victims killed in the revenge attacks is not known yet. The SLN soldiers who entered the settlement Friday evening attacked the civilians wounding more than 30 persons.

One dead, another injured in separate incidents: Dec 25 - Mr. Weerakody (65), retired employee of the Sri Lanka Port Authority was shot dead Saturday night around 8.30 p.m. by unidentified men close to his house located in Orr's Hill area, a suburb in Trincomalee town. Large number of soldiers of the Sri Lanka Army and Sri Lanka Navy rushed to the site and took several Tamil civilians residing close to the scene for questioning and later released. The gunmen reportedly came on a motorbike and fired at the victim when he was guiding his son who was at the wheel of a lorry taking it inside the compound of the house of the deceased from the main road, police sources said. Security forces set up roadblocks immediately surrounding the Orr's Hill area and blamed the Tamil Tigers for the attack. Meanwhile, in another incident on the same day, Mr. Mayura aged 29, was shot Sunday afternoon near Langanagar, another suburb of east port town. He was taken to the Trincomalee general hospital with gun shot injuries.

Two shot dead, grenade attack on army patrol: Dec 25 - Two civilians from Thoppu, in Atchuveley Jaffna, who reportedly went to hunt wild boars in shrub jungles close to the Palaly High Security Zone (HSZ) armed with shotguns, were shot dead by Sri Lanka Army (SLA) troops at 12.15 a.m Sunday (25) early morning. In another incident, Ariyaratnam Kanagarasa (65) from

Siththankerny in Jaffna, an employee at a bakery in Navakeeri located along the Punnalaikattuvar- Nilavarai road was found shot to death at 1.45 a.m. the same morning. His body was found on Palaly road near Punnalaikattuvar junction and was not removed until noon Sunday as Police in Jaffna have refused carrying out administrative duties.

Meanwhile, an SLA patrol along the beach road in Urani, Valvettithurai (VVT) came under grenade attack followed by gunfire from three suspected LTTE gunmen at 9 a.m. Sunday. The gunmen escaped and no injuries were reported.

Checkpoint near SLAF airport attacked, one dead: Jan 26 - Suspected Tamil Tigers fired at a checkpoint at Puthunagar, near Batticaloa Valaiyiravu Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) airport, 4 km west of Batticaloa town, wounding a policeman Sunday (25) night around 1:20 a.m. The policeman, N. Karunaratne, later succumbed to his gunshot wounds at Batticaloa Hospital.

Boycott call cripples administration in Jaffna: Dec 26 - Civil administration in Jaffna district came to a following call by the NorthEast Government Services Workers Consortium for Government workers to shun work to protest against alleged military attacks against civilians and workers. The Consortium warned that the strike would continue until troops are vacated from main roads and in the vicinity of Government offices, and their workers' safety was guaranteed. Primary offices of Civil administration including Jaffna Secretariat, Divisional secretariats, Health services department, Department of Education remained closed. Although several hundreds of troops were deployed to provide safety around Jaffna Secretariat, only the Government Agent, K Ganesh, reported to work. Judicial establishments including Courts, the five district courts in Kayts, Jaffna, Mallakam, Chavakachcheri and Point Pedro, and the High Court in Jaffna remained closed. However, commercial establishments, public transport and hospitals continued to provide essential services.

Two Tamil youths shot dead: Dec 26 - Soldiers shot and killed two Tamil youths at Santhiveli 9 km north of Eravur in Batticaloa district around 10:30 a.m. on Monday (26). The SLA soldiers have told Eravur Police that they opened fire following gunshots fired at their troopers. The youths shot dead by the Lankan troopers are yet to be identified, Eravur Police said. The incident took place near the railway track between Morakkoddanchenai and Santhiveli.

Two three-wheeler drivers killed: Dec 26 - Unidentified men shot dead Mr. Ramanan and knifed Mr. Wijeseelan to death Sunday (25) night in two separate incidents in Trincomalee. The body of Mr. Wijeseelan was recovered from the Kanniya-Wilgam Vihare junction, and the body of Mr. Ramanan was recovered near fourth milepost along Trincomalee-Kandy highway with gunshot injuries. Both were three-wheeler drivers. Unidentified men hired their three-wheelers separately. Mr. Ramanan went with persons who hired his three-wheeler towards fourth-mile post at about 7.45 p.m. Sunday. Mr. Wijeseelan went with three-wheeler with hired persons Sunday night around 11.45 p.m. Bodies of both persons were recovered Monday (26) morning.

PLOTE senior member killed: Dec 26 - A senior PLOTE member identified as V. Thripupathy, alias Thirupathy Master, was shot dead by suspected LTTE cadres on Wednesday (26) evening at Rambakulam in Eravur while another member was injured. Military sources said that the two PLOTE members were having tea at a tea shop in front of their political office at Rambakulam, when the LTTE gunmen appeared and shot at them, according to PLOTE sources.

Youth shot, seriously wounded: Dec 26 - A 24-years-old Tamil youth, Mr. Satheskumar, was shot and seriously wounded by gun-

men Monday (26) evening around 5:30 pm. at Pisthar Road in Akkaraipattu, 58 km south of Batticaloa town. The gunmen fled from site using Satheskumar's motorbike. Satheskumar, a resident of Alayadivembu, was rushed to Amparai hospital with serious injuries.

3 SLA soldiers, 2 Police officers injured in attacks: Jan 26 - Three soldiers and two Sri Lanka Police officers were injured in three different attacks against security forces in Jaffna district Monday on (26). Two police officers were injured when suspected Tamil Tigers hurled grenades at a Police post along the Kodikamam-Point Pedro road near the Kodikamam junction around 1.30 p.m. A SLA soldier was injured in a grenade attack followed by gunfire at the SLA sentry in near Kailasapillaiyar temple in Temple Road where Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) offices are located in Nallur Jaffna at 7.30 p.m. In a third incident, two SLA soldiers were injured when assailants threw hand grenades into an SLA sentry at Thattatheru junction in Jaffna at 9 p.m.

Civilians killed in retaliation: Dec 26 - Five persons were killed when the LTTE allegedly attacked the army near Kottady in Jaffna Fort and the army fired back at the attackers on Saturday 24 December. The LTTE has said that all the five persons killed by the army were civilians. The dead have been identified as Ratnakumar Kunasegar (19) of Kanagarayankulam, Kurikkaddukulam, Vavuniya, Thirunavukkarasu Jayakanthan (26) of Palai, Kilinochchi and Parameswari Somasuntharam (Ruba) (26) of Konavil, Killinochi. Krishnan Vimalaswaran, 39, a night watcher who was on duty at Jaffna Central College, and Palasingham Chandrakumar from Manipay

Eleven SLA soldiers killed in Claymore attack: Dec 27 - Eleven SLA soldiers were killed and six wounded in a Claymore ambush by suspected LTTE cadres on an Army convoy near the Regional Bus Depot, 1 km south of Point Pedro town on Jaffna-Point Pedro road at 12:50 p.m. on Tuesday (27). Three civilians who were shot by the SLA troopers following the ambush were rushed to Point Pedro Teaching Hospital. Three soldiers with serious wounds were rushed to Palaly military hospital. Four soldiers and three civilians were admitted at Point Pedro Teaching Hospital (Manthikai hospital), medical sources said. Mr. Nallathamby Thangarajah, 40, from Polikandy, Ms. Sivagowri Subramaniam, 24, from Puloly and Mr. Kandiah Subramaniam, 53, from Thumpalai, were the wounded persons. Two of the civilians, seriously wounded, were transferred to Jaffna Hospital. The attack took place when troopers were on their way to a nearby spot where a grenade was lobbed by unidentified attackers around 12:20 p.m.

'The Roaring Peoples Force': Dec 27 - So far, this month, 28 SLA soldiers and 14 Sri Lanka Navy personnel had been killed and scores more had been injured, in landmine, grenade and gun attacks, SL military sources said.

A group that identifies itself as "The Roaring Peoples Force," has claimed responsibility for the various attacks that have taken place in Sri Lanka Army controlled areas stating that the attacks were in retaliation to the SLA and SLN violence that has claimed the lives of civilians. The group, in a recent fax message sent to local media, has renewed its warning of the escalation of attacks on Sri Lankan security forces until it withdraws from "occupied areas". The Army authorities have described the organisation and other similar organisations as front outfits of the Tamil Tigers.

Armed men drive away two Halo Trust vehicles: Dec 27 - Unidentified armed men forced into the parking garage located close to the offices of Halo Trust, located at the junction of Nallur Cross Street and Navalur Road, and drove away two vehicles belonging to the NGO after tying the guards on Tuesday (27)

afternoon. No information is available on where the vehicles were taken. Following the robbery of vehicles, Sri Lanka Army (SLA) and police cordoned and searched the surrounding areas. No one was arrested in the search. Police have accused the LTTE of being responsible for the break-in and theft of the vehicles and equipment. Prior to this incident, a computer and land mine clearing equipments were also stolen from the same compound. Halo Trust is an NGO currently involved in demining operations in Jaffna district.

Seven persons 'missing' in Jaffna: Dec 27 - Three fishermen who set off for fishing Thursday (22) in the Mannar seas from Gurunagar coastal suburb of Jaffna, Joseph Christurajah, 48, Saverian Sreesilvester, 48, and Kajanbert Kongland, 28, have reportedly not returned from the seas and their parents have lodged complaints at the office of Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission in Jaffna.

Three youths reportedly arrested on Saturday (24) in different areas in Jaffna by soliders, Murugathas Theeparooban, 19, from Kaithady East, Nunaval, Jeyapalaratnam Prasanth, 19, from Katpakapillayar Road, Uduvil and Joseph Sutharan, 48, from Sandilippay have not returned home after being arrested by the soliders and are missing, parents of the youths reported. A student from Kokkuvil East, Thevakumar Ramanan, has also been reported missing since December 17, according to his parents.

Two LTTE cadres shot dead: Dec 28 - Two LTTE cadres, who allegedly hurled a grenade at the army in the Irupalai area in Jaffna were shot and killed on the spot when the army fired back at them. The two attackers had come by on a motorcycle and attacked the army at Irupalai with a hand grenade around 5:45 pm and had tried to escape when they were killed.

Grenade attack kills soldier, injures wife: Jan 28 - Mr. Sunil, a soldier, was killed, and his wife and brother-in-law were injured when suspected Tamil Tigers hurled a grenade and opened fire inside the soldier's house located in Sangamam, a suburb located about five km northeast of Trincomalee town along Kandy-Trincomalee highway Tuesday (28) night around 9 p.m. The injured are warded in the Trincomalee general hospital. The soldier's death brought the number of killings in a three day period in Trincomalee to four marking an escalation in violence in the district.

Two youths shot dead: Jan 28 - Soldiers manning the check-point at Mutthirai Junction, located on Jaffna - Point Pedro Road near Nallur, reportedly stopped two youths who came in a motorbike and shot dead both of them after beating one of them against a wall. The incident took place Wednesday (29) at 5:00 p.m. According to the police, the two men on the motorbike failed to stop when ordered. Jaffna Police said that the soldiers had recovered a grenade from the killed youths. The victims were identified as Yogarajah Gajendran, 21, from Kolumbuthurai, Ariyalai, and Paranchothy Theepan, 27, from Kanduvil Veethy, Ariyalai. In another incident on the same day, two SLA soldiers were wounded in two different grenade attacks, one in Urumpirai Junction at 1:30 p.m. and another at Punnalaikadduvan at 2:30 p.m., Police sources said.

16-years-old boy shot dead: Dec 29 - Unidentified gunmen on Wednesday (Dec 29) midnight shot and killed Thambirajah Arul Ajanthan, 16, at his house located in Eruvan in Kodikamam. The gunmen who entered the victim's house opened fire and killed the victim, the younger brother of a youth who took part in organising Martyrs day remembrance events. Reportedly soldiers from the SLA camp located within one kilometer from the victim's house, had entered the house during a search operation a few days earlier..

Grenade attack on SLA sentry: Jan 29 - Suspected LTTE men lobbed a grenade at a Sri Lanka Army sentry, which is located in Mannar playgrounds Wednesday (Dec 29) night around 9:30 p.m. No one was injured in the incident. More than hundred soldiers, following the explosion, launched a search operation in areas, Moor Street, Sinnakadai and Uppukulam. Reportedly the soldiers fired in air at random and assaulted civilian travellers waiting in the Mannar bus stand. The LTTE's political and administrative office, which was unoccupied at that time was reportedly damaged by the soldiers.

Policeman shot, seriously wounded:: Dec 29 - Suspected LTTE gunmen shot and wounded Alagaratnam Lingarajah, 36, a Sri Lanka Police constable, Wednesday (Dec 29) night 8:45 p.m. at Thandawanveli Telecom Junction in Batticaloa town. Gunmen riding in a motorbike opened fire on the policeman, who was off-duty and was going to a shop to purchase food, Batticaloa Police said. The wounded policeman has been admitted to Batticaloa Hospital. Meanwhile, Kalliyankadu checkpoint of the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) came under gunfire on the same day night around 8:20 p.m., police said.

Soldier killed, civilians injured: Dec 29 - A soldier was killed and several civilians injured in a grenade attack in Trincomalee.. On Tuesday (28) suspected LTTE cadres hurled a grenade accompanied by shooting at the house of the soldier at the 4th mile post in Trincomalee around 8.35 p.m. The soldier identified as W D Sunil was killed on the spot while his wife and a brother who were injured were admitted to Trincomalee hospital in a critical condition. Meanwhile a powerful claymore mine which had been set up by the rebels at Mawadivembu on the Batticaloa-Valaichchenai main road was detected by soldiers yesterday afternoon. It was later deactivated. According to Eravur police the soldiers had detected the mine during a surveillance operation in the area. The mine had been set targeting a group of security personnel, Army sources said. In another incident, a grenade was hurled at a police post at the central bus stand in Batticaloa and another explosion had taken place in Valaichchenai on the same night.

Three grenade attacks: Dec 29 - One soldier was seriously injured when suspected LTTE gunmen attacked an SLA foot patrol in Inuvil area, Jaffna, at 6 p.m on Thursday (Dec 30). Inuvil has been isolated after the incident as the SLA has cordoned off the area. No other details of the injured soldier are available. Meanwhile, on the same day attackers hurled a grenade and exchanged gunfire with Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers manning the sentry at the Valvettiturai, Vadamardachy Aathi Kovilady along the beach road, Wednesday 9.20 p.m. No one was injured in the incident. SLA has increased patrols in the area, according to residents. In another grenade attack at the Nallur Arasady junction sentry point at 1 p.m on the same day, one Sri Lanka Army soldier was seriously injured.

Gunmen fire on army patrol in Jaffna: Dec 30 - Two soldiers were injured when suspected LTTE men fired at an SLA patrol close to the Jaffna Kandarmadam junction and Jaffna Hindu Ladies College Friday (Dec 30) around 2.30 p.m. Army arrived at the site and launched a cordon and search operation. Soldiers stopped all traffic and civilian movements through the area. Several civilians were assaulted during the search.

Six soldiers injured in grenade and gun attack: Dec 30 - Six soldiers were injured in a grenade attack by suspected LTTE men on the 52-4 Brigade Head Quarters in Varani, in the Thenmaradchi sector of the Jaffna Peninsula, around 9 p.m., on Friday Dec 30). Several gunshots were heard following the explosion of the grenade.. The SLA camp is located on the Kodikamam-Pt. Pedro road, between Varani market and Varani Maha Vidyalayam.

Man shot dead at Urelu in Jaffna: Dec 31 - Unidentified gunmen riding in a motorbike shot and killed a 28-years-old man, Jeyaseelan Yogalingam, near a Sri Lanka Army check post located close to Urumpirai Hindu College, Saturday (Dec 31) at 6:30 a.m. The victim, a civilian from Kuttiyapulam in Vayavilan, once employed in the civil administration run by the LTTE, is a father of a 4-months-old baby.

SLA conducts cordon and search operations: Dec 31 - Soldiers cordoned off and conducted a house-to-house search Mailankudal area in Illavalai 12km north of Jaffna town Saturday (Dec 31) for nearly four hours from 7 a.m. The search area included Maresankudal where two vehicles belonging to Halo Trust, robbed on Tuesday (27 Dec) from the de-mining Organization's offices in Nallur Jaffna, were later found abandoned. Security Forces, cordoned off the Jaffna town area and subjected students, patients visiting Jaffna Teaching Hospital, and teachers arriving at the Vembadi Girls High School and Jaffna Central College to correct GCE (OL) answer scripts to severe questioning and demanded production of their national cards.

Government offices to close: Dec 31 - Even as the security situation remained tense in the North with a number of incidents involving the LTTE and the security forces, the 'Tamil Labour Organization', suspected to be a LTTE front group, has ordered all government offices in the North to remain closed and public servants not to report for work from next week. Accordingly all government offices will put up shutters from the January 2, 2006, sources in Vavuniya said. Already in Jaffna, Vavuniya and Mannar government offices remain closed for almost a week and the public in the North have been put into serious inconvenience. Only hospitals and health facilities, food supply and Courts remain open. Senior public official sources said the LTTE front group has ordered public servant not to report for duty until the volatile security situation returns to normal.

PLOTE cadre abducted in Vavuniya: Jan 1 - Krishnasamy Thirunavukarsu, 26, also called Mani, of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), was abducted by unknown persons at 10.30 p.m. Saturday (31 Dec) from his home in Veppankulam in Vavuniya, Police sources in Vavuniya said. Reports from Vavuniya said, the intruders announced themselves as Vavuniya Police and when Mr Thirunavukarsu opened the door, he was subdued and driven off in a vehicle. Also, no additional information has become available on Senior PLOTE cadre. Sinnathamby Ganeshalingam, alias Farook, who disappeared from Vavuniya on 12 December. The PLOTE has blamed the Tamil Tigers for the abductions.

Gunmen attack army patrol, 2 wounded: Jan 1 - Two Sri Lanka Army soldiers were wounded when suspected LTTE gunmen lobbed a hand grenade and opened fire at an SLA patrol in Varani, northeast of Jaffna in Thenmaradchi at 12:30 p.m. Sunday (1). The attack took place between Varani market and the SLA's 52-4 Brigade Head Quarters in Varani. The attackers lobbed a hand grenade 100 meters away from the main entrance of the Brigade HQ. The soldiers wounded in the attack were rushed to Palaly Military Hospital with serious wounds. All roads in the area were blocked following the attack.

Families seek safer areas outside Jaffna: Jan 1 - Following escalating violence and disruption to normal life in the Jaffna district, one hundred and two families have reportedly travelled from Jaffna to safer areas in Vanni and other districts taking their belongings, Political office of the Liberation Tigers in Pallai said Sunday (1). More than 50 families are from the coastal areas of Vadamardchy including Valvettiturai according to entries made in the Muhamalai customs offices of the Liberation Tigers. Meanwhile, Jaffna District Tamil National Workers Union, in a memo-

randum released Sunday, said that the workers' boycott of Banks and other Government Offices will be suspended from Monday (2). "We are suspending the work stoppage to ease the burden on Jaffna residents, and we will not hesitate to resume the boycott if the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) continues to act disregarding the safety of our workers," the memorandum said.

Cordon and search operation in Colombo: Jan 2 - Some 53 people including a suspected LTTE cadre were detained out of some 1,000 Tamil youth taken in after a massive cordon and search operation carried out in Colombo on Saturday (31 Dec). Colombo DIG Pujitha Jayasundara said the 53 people detained were residents from the North and East. He said the operation involved more than 2,000 police officers and 2,400 army personnel. Television reports said last night about 35 of the 53 were released later.

Four people including three Tamil youth were also arrested over the possession of medical equipment worth more than Rs 10 million from a house at Sarana Road in Borella during the operation. The Health Ministry and the police are probing to find out whether the stock was brought to be sent to the North.

Civilian shot dead in Eravur: Jan 2 - Unidentified gunmen, riding in a white van, shot and killed an owner of an electric workshop at Vantharumoolai, 5 km northwest of Eravur, Police said. The shop owner was at his workshop located on Batticaloa - Valaichenai main road when the gunmen shot and killed the victim with a T-56 rifle around 9:30 a.m. Monday (2). The victim, Veerasingham Prapaharan, 35, was reportedly a supporter of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The gunmen fled the site in their van on the main road.

Mannar youth missing: Jan 2 - Mr. Navaratnam Thiyogu Vasanthakumar, 25, who was taken away by three masked men on the 26 December night has not returned home yet, his wife, Ms Siromi, 23, mother of four year old girl Monday (2) lodged a complaint with the Mannar Citizen Committee, Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) and the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission (SLHRC). Mr. Vasanthakumar is a native of Silavathurai in Mannar district but later he shifted his residence to Talaimannar Pier area. According to Ms Siromi, three masked men had entered her house that night and asked her husband about the house of one Mr Bosco. Thereafter the masked men had asked her husband to accompany them. The Mannar Police and the Sri Lanka Navy have denied any involvement with the arrest and disappearance of Mr. Vasanthakumar when the complainant approached them, sources said.

Five killed, two wounded in Trinco: Jan 2 - Men riding in a three-wheeler lobbed a grenade into a group of people killing five persons and wounding two, on the Dockyard Road in Trincomalee town, Monday night around 7:50 p.m. The victims are yet to be identified, Trincomalee Police said. The victims were seated on a bench opposite the Dutch Bay sea beach along the Dockyard Road, sources said.

8-Lane swimming pool to be built in Trinco: Jan 2 - Swim Lanka, a Charitable Trust, has laid foundation for the construction of an eight-lane swimming pool at an estimated cost of ten million rupees in Trincomalee esplanade. This will be the first swimming pool to be constructed under "Learn to Swim Campaign," after tsunami disaster. Mr. Sundaram Arumainayagam, Trincomalee Divisional Secretary and the Special Commissioner of the Trincomalee Urban Council (UC) laid the first stone for the project Saturday (31 Dec) evening in a forty-perch plot released by the UC from its esplanade. Adopt Sri Lanka, another international organization, is providing the funds and Swim Lanka will be responsible for implementing the project which is expected to complete by the end of June this year, SwimLanka officials said.

Teachers demand release of arrested colleague: Jan 2 - Trainee teachers at the Palaly Teachers Training college boycotted classes Monday demanding the release of fellow trainee Packianathan Kamalakannan who was arrested and being detained by the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) following the claymore mine attack in Point Pedro on 27 December when twelve SLA soldiers were killed. Mr Kamalakannan from Thumpalai, Point Pedro, was arrested soon after the claymore blast from Point Pedro town.

Two soldiers shot, wounded in Jaffna: Jan 3 - Two soldiers, including a lieutenant were wounded when two suspected bicycle-riding gunmen shot at them at Kasthuriyar - Hospital Road junction of Jaffna town, around 11:15 a.m. on Tuesday (3). Several civilians were reportedly harassed and assaulted by the troops who cordoned off the area and conducting a search operation. All the shops in the vicinity put down their shutters and civilians deserted the roads following the incident. The wounded soldiers were taken to Palaly Military Hospital.

Two soldiers wounded in grenade attack: Jan 3 - Suspected LTTE attackers riding in a motorbike lobbed a grenade on Sri Lanka Army troopers seriously wounding two soldiers who were on duty at a check post on Bar Road in Batticaloa town, near Batticaloa Railway station. The attack took place around 01:45 p.m. Tuesday (3). The wounded soldiers, Anilkumara Nanthasena, 24, and Piyasena Thilinakumara, 20, were rushed to Batticaloa Hospital, sources said. SLA soldiers and policemen cordoned off and searched the area following the grenade attack.

Hindu priest shot dead: Jan 3 - Sellathamby Visagaratnam, 55, Chief priest at the Santhively Kannagi Amman temple was shot dead by unknown gunmen on Monday (2) night at 10-30 pm at Alaiyadychcholai in Kiran Valaichenai, sources in Batticaloa said. The priest was sleeping in his hut inside the Liberation Tigers controlled region of Kiran when he was shot. The priest has four children.

LTTE official, civilian killed mine attack: Jan 3 - Major Jeyanthan, Liberation Tigers Vavuniya West area political head and a civilian, Mr. Vinotharan Thevarasa, were killed when a Claymore mine exploded hitting the motorbike in which they were riding in LTTE controlled area at Chinnavalaiyankattu, 45 km east of Mannar town, LTTE sources said. The Claymore mine was allegedly exploded by a group of Sri Lankan soldiers around 4:00 p.m. Tuesday, according to the sources. The LTTE official, Maj. Jeyanthan, killed in the Claymore attack was a disabled cadre who had lost one of his legs, the sources added. The bodies of Major Jeyanthan and Vinothan were taken to Kilinochchi.

Two teenage Tigers escape: Jan 3 - Two teenage LTTE cadres, who reportedly ran away from the LTTE camp in Sampoor, Trincomalee, on Sunday (1) evening, surrendered to the Navy seeking protection. Military spokesperson Brigadier Prasad Samarasinghe said the teens, who are from the Muttur and Uppuveli areas, are under 18 years of age and are to be produced before the courts shortly. He also said that according to the escapees, they were detained and trained at the Kadiraweli LTTE camp in the LTTE controlled areas.

Businessman succumbs to gunshot wounds: Jan 3 - Mr Balenthiran, a Tamil businessman and father of two children, who was shot and seriously injured by unknown gunmen on Tuesday (3) night 10.30 p.m. at Wellawatta in Colombo, succumbed to his injuries at 2.50 a.m. on the following day in Colombo National Hospital, medical source said. He was shot near the Rolex Bakery. He was initially rushed to the Kalubowila Hospital in critical condition and was later transferred to Colombo General Hospital, medical sources said. The gunmen reportedly came in a white van and drove away after the shooting. At the time of his killing, Mr

Balendran was the owner of Atlas travels which serves Colombo-Jaffna travel service, according to sources. His son, Mr Kandipan, is an announcer at the Shakhthy Radio.

Abducted PLOTE member found killed: Jan 4 - The body of Krishnasamy Thirunavukarsu, 26, also called Mani, a member of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) who was abducted from his home in Veppankulam in Vavuniya three days earlier, was found Wednesday (4) morning in the village of Attambusgasgoda located 15 km southeast of Vavuniya town, Kepitigollawa Police said. The victim's National Identity Card and Driver's permit recovered inside his clothing helped the Police to identify the body as belonging to Thirunavukarsu, Police said. Reports received at the time of his abduction said that the intruders announced themselves as Vavuniya Police and when Mr Thirunavukarsu opened the door, he was abducted and driven off in a vehicle. PLOTE has blamed the LTTE for the abduction and murder of their member.

Wife dead, husband injured in gunfire: Jan 4 - Mrs Sepamalai Victoria, 32, was killed and her husband Vadivel Manokaran, 40, was injured in gunfire Tuesday (3) night at 8.30 p.m. in Sethukkuda Batticaloa. The couple was talking in front of their house when the incident happened. The exact cause of gunfire and the motive behind the shooting is yet to be established, Police said. Both were rushed to the Batticaloa Hospital and Manokaran's condition is serious, medical sources said. Sethukkuda is in Puthur near Batticaloa Airport and is located 2 km west of Batticaloa town.

Former EPDP member shot dead: Jan 4 - Kankesan Sivanesan, 30, was shot dead by suspected LTTE gunmen at 7.30 p.m. Tuesday (3) in front of his house near Hospital Road, Kayts. Residents said that Sivanesan earlier worked for the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP). Sivanesan has a brother who is also a member of the EPDP.

SLA's DPU responsible for Claymore attack: Jan 4 - LTTE's Political Head of Mannar District, Mr. Iniyavan, said that there were two Claymore mines bound to a tree and wired to a triggering device operated a few meters away from the spot where LTTE Vavuniya West Political Co-ordinator Major Jeyanthan was killed with a civilian supporter riding in a motorbike on Tuesday (3). "A deep penetration unit of the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) is known to operate from the Iranai Illuppaikulam SLA base," Iniyavan told TamilNet after showing the site to Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) members Wednesday (4) morning. The Claymore explosion that claimed the life of Maj. Jeyanthan, took place 4 km near Chinnavalayankattu, 47 km east of Mannar. Iniyavan further said that the Tigers had registered the activities of the "deep penetrating units" operating from Iranai Illuppaikulam SLA base charging that these units were "re-engaged" in reconnaissance missions and ambush operations in violation of the Cease Fire Agreement.

Hindu priest shot dead: Jan 5 - Sellathamby Visagaratnam, 55, Chief priest at the Santhively Kannagi Amman temple was shot dead by unknown gunmen on Monday (2) night at 10.30 pm at Alaiyadychcholai in Kiran Valaichenai, in Batticaloa. The priest was sleeping in his hut inside the Liberation Tigers controlled region of Kiran when he was shot. The priest had four children.

No academic freedom in Eastern University: 5 Jan - The Federation of University Teachers Associations (FUTA) has in statement expressed grave concern that the Academics at the Eastern university, Batticaloa are not allowed to carry out their duties without fear due to reasons which are non academic and beyond their control. Though the University functions there is no environment conducive to disseminate knowledge or to engage in research. "The Federation requests the Minister of Educa-

tion and the government to look into the conditions prevailing at the Eastern University and make sure that the university teachers and others could work in undisturbed surroundings," the statement said.

Two soldiers wounded in landmine attack: Jan 5 - Two SLA soldiers were wounded in a Claymore attack on a SLA tractor at Thevakulam, near Ichankulam northwest of Vavuniya around 9:45 a.m. Thursday (5). One SLA sergeant with serious wounds was rushed to Vavuniya Hospital. Seven soldiers were travelling in the tractor. The Claymore attack took place at Thevakulam located between Puthukulam and Ichankulam northwest of Mannar. The soldiers were from Kalmadu SLA camp located 12 km northwest of Vavuniya town.

Indian Executive shot dead: Jan 5 - Mr Atmakuru Prasad, 25, from Hyderabad in Andhra Province in India was shot dead by unknown gunmen at 9.30 pm Wednesday (4) near Alfred Place in Dehiwela Colombo. Mr Prasad was returning to his house after finishing his dinner at a Galle Road hotel when he was shot. Mr Prasad was rushed to the Kalubowila Hospital and then transferred to Colombo National Hospital where he died at 11.30 pm. Mr Prasad was a Technical Executive officer, Cable Unit, at a private Mobile Telephone company in Colpetty, Colombo and lived alone in a rented annex at No.41 in Alfred Place.

Man shot dead in 'self defence': Jan 6 - Rasaratnam Kuganenthiran, 24, also called Sinnathamby, a resident of Puthukkulam in Kiran Batticaloa was allegedly shot dead by Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers Thursday (5) 9.30 am in front of the offices of a local NGO, Thadagam, on the Korakallimadu Batticaloa-Valaichenai Highway, Mr Kuganenthiran reportedly did not have the National Identity card in his possession. SLA soldiers involved in the shooting had told the Eravur Police that they fired in self-defence when the man tried to attack.

Two grenade attacks in Trincomalee: Jan 5 - A Sinhala woman was injured when unidentified men threw a grenade at a sentry point located near the Abeyapura Sinhalese settlement near Trincomalee town, Thursday (5) night. Earlier in a separate incident unidentified persons lobbed a grenade at a sentry point near Kanthasamy Temple in the Grand Bazaar area of Trincomalee town. However it did not explode. Bomb disposal squad of the Sri Lanka Army rushed to the site and defused it, security sources said.

One youth killed, three injured in grenade attack: Jan 5 - Mr Kunam Thanus, 22, was killed and three others seriously injured when unknown gunmen hurled a grenade and fired gunshots at the youths Thursday (5) night at 8 p.m. near a tailor shop in Kanagaratnam Road, Valaichenai, sources from Batticaloa said. The incident took place near Hindu collage in Valaichenai in the Batticaloa area in the east. Mathanraj, 20, Sarathkumar, 20, and Kala, 58, were identified as the injured who were rushed to Valaichenai hospital and later were transferred to Batticaloa hospital, medical sources said.

Search of newspaper office: Jan 6 - Soldiers on Friday (6) afternoon cordoned off and searched the offices of Jaffna daily Yarl Thinakkural following an incident earlier when the SLA sentry near Sivankovilady in KKS Road in Jaffna came under grenade attack by suspected Tamil Tigers. The grenade did not explode, but the businesses around the area started to close. The soldiers came after a photographer who was taking pictures of events unfolding but the man escaped. Angered by this SLA troopers claimed that the said photographer worked for the Thinakkural daily and decided to search the office, sources said.

Shot and killed at point blank range: Jan 6 - Thangarajah Pradeeshkumar, 32, who lived close to a Sri Lanka Army (SLA) garrison in Uduvil near the boundary of High Security Zone, was

shot dead Thursday (5) around 10 p.m by unidentified gunmen at point-blank range. The gunmen had called Pradeeshkumar to come outside his house in Uduvil Road, near Chunnakam in Jaffna shot him dead and escaped.

Explosives found in Mannar bound bus: Jan 6 - Police at the Murunkan checkpoint on the Vavuniya-Mannar road detected seized 56 highly explosive gelignite sticks after searching a Mannar bound bus from Colombo and arrested three persons for being in possession of the explosives, according to military sources. The detection and followed a routine police search of the bus after it reached the Murunkan Police checkpoint at 5.30 a.m. Police suspect the gelignite sticks were special explosives were being transported to be used against Security Forces in Mannar. Meanwhile, Security Forces and Police on search and clearing operations in Velambaveli, Batticaloa detected a two kilo claymore mine along with a 50 metre wire, military sources added. With the detection of this claymore mine, Security Forces have recovered seven claymore mines in the North and East since December 1.

Halo Trust to resume de-mining operations: Jan 7 - Non-Governmental Organization, Halo trust, which suspended its demining operations in Jaffna following the theft of two of their vehicles, announced Friday (6) that it would be resuming its operations from Monday, 9 January, officials of the NGO said.

Officials of Halo trust brought back to the Organization's premises located on Nallur Cross Street more than 65 of its vehicles and de-mining equipments which were held inside the High Security Zone (HSZ) on 29 December under the security of the Sri Lanka armed forces following the theft of the Trust's vehicles and equipment by unidentified persons. Halo Trust has informed its more than 400 employees to report for work on Monday (9) and to participate in a parade to be held at 9 a.m., sources said.

Senior PLOTE cadre shot in Jaffna: Jan 7 - A senior member of Peoples Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), Kennedy, was shot and seriously injured by two suspected LTTE gunmen at the bicycle park in front of Jaffna Teaching Hospital at 10.15 a.m. Saturday (7). He was immediately admitted to the emergency operating unit of the Jaffna Teaching Hospital with life threatening gunshot injuries, medical sources said. Hospital sources said that Kennedy received injuries to this chest and neck areas. The gunmen came in bicycles and used micropistol to shoot at the victim before escaping in bicycles.

Two LTTE operatives killed in mine attack: Jan 7 - The Deep Penetration Unit (DPU) of the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) in Thambalakamam jungle in the Trincomalee district has killed two cadres of Liberation Tigers on Friday (6) early morning around 2 a.m in a claymore mine attack. The attack took place inside the LTTE held area, Elilan, Political Head of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for Trincomalee district, told the TamilNet website. Captain Suman (Vensumin Anpurasa) of Trincomalee and Lt. Umainsan (Perinaparasa Sasiathan) of Muttur were killed in the claymore attack, LTTE said in a statement.

Grenade attack in Point Pedro: Jan 7 - Suspected assailants riding a motorbike hurled a grenade at the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) checkpoint in Navalady Point-Pedro at 1.15 p.m. Saturday (7). Unconfirmed reports said two SLA soldiers were injured in the attack. SLA sources did not confirm any injuries in the explosion. During the indiscriminate firing by the SLA troops following the attack, Sivaraja Jesipan, 13, a school boy walking close to the sentry, was seriously injured. With gunshot injuries to his head, Jesipan was initially rushed to the Point Pedro Government Hospital in Manthikai and later transferred to Jaffna Teaching Hospital and his condition remains serious, sources added.

Man shot dead in Eravur: Jan 8 - Kandasamy Shanmuganathan, 31, a civilian, was shot dead by Sri Lanka Army (SLA) troops Sunday (7) morning at 10.30 a.m. in Eravur Vantharumoolai in Batticaloa. The incident took place in front of the Pathini Amman Temple in Thevapuram, sources said. SLA said they killed the man in self-defence when he tried to attack them, but the residents of the area said that Mr Shanmuganathan was on his way to buy provisions in a shop when he was killed. Police took the body to Chenkalady Hospital at 4 p.m. for postmortem examinations. Vantharumoolai lies 18 km north of Batticaloa town.

Grenade attacks damage tw houses: Jan 8 - Grenade attacks damaged two different houses belonging to Muslims on Saturday (7) night at Meera Odai, Valaichenai in Batticaloa. The houses were located in Bathuriya Nagar and Mancholai in Meera Odai. Valaichenai lies 32 km north of Batticaloa town.

Two soldiers injured in grenade attack: Jan 8 - Suspected LTTE gunmen riding a motorbike hurled grenades at a Sri Lanka Army (SLA) foot patrol near the Sub office of Valigamam east Pradeshya Sabha building along the Jaffna Point Pedro road in Kopay at 1.15 p.m. injuring two soldiers. The condition of one of the soldiers was reported to be serious and the injured soldiers have been moved to Palaly Military Hospital. Soldiers fired at the assailants after the grenade attack but both of them escaped unhurt.

Three murders in two days Point Pedro: Jan 8 - Sinnarasa Rasaiah, 47, alleged to be "an army informant" from Vinayaga Mudaliyar (VM) Road in Point Pedro town in northern Jaffna, and owner of a bakery, was shot and killed at 3.30 p.m. Sunday (8) by unknown gunmen who forced entry into the bakery located within 100 meters of the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) 52-4 Brigade Head Quarters within the High Security Zone (HSZ) encompassing the Point-Pedro harbour. Military sources blamed the LTTE for the killing. Iyathurai Baskeran, 27, an LTTE supporter displaced from Kudathanai was found shot to death in Katkovalam Saturday (7).

Mathan a Point Pedro Urban Council employee and a supporter of the EPDP was abducted from his home by unknown men and was stabbed to death Thursday (5) night. His body was discovered along Thumpalai Road near 2nd Cross Street, 1 km east of Point Pedro town with severe cut wounds. Mathan who is a father of two children, had previously made complaints to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) that he had received death threats. This is the third murder to have been carried out within the High Security Zone within the last two days.

Seven detained over Point Pedro claymore attack: Jan 8 - Seven persons reportedly from nearby areas of Point Pedro who were missing after the Claymore ambush on a Sri Lanka Army convoy near the Regional Bus Depot, south of Point Pedro town which killed twelve Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers have been found to be detained in Point Pedro Police station, security sources said. Mr. Rohitha Priyatharsana, Jaffna regional co-ordinator of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) visited the detainees Sunday (8). The persons detained arrested under the prevailing Emergency Regulations have been identified as Markandu Thirunelcan, 18, Nellandai, Thumpalai; Tharmarajah Kugathas, 31, Thumpalai; Pulendran Nagendran, 23, Nelliady, Karaveddi; Somasundaram Santhakumar, 28, Point Pedro; George Ramodi, 41, 3rd Cross Street, Point Pedro; Pakiyathan Kamalakannan, 25, Point Pedro, and Pathmanathan Manoharan, 31, Point Pedro.

Three SLA soldiers injured: Jan 8 - Three Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers were seriously injured when suspected LTTE assailants hurled grenade at their truck in Mutur, Pachchanoor at 7.20 p.m. Sunday (8). The injured soldiers have been taken to

Trincomalee General Hospital. The SLA truck was heavily damaged in the attack, according to eye witnesses.

Three killed in separate incidents: Jan 9 - A Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldier was killed in a grenade attack on a sentry post at 58th milepost in Killiveddy area in Muttur division, south of Trincomalee, around 9 p.m., Sunday (8). Two others were killed when the soldiers retaliated. SLA authorities claimed that the men killed were Tamil Tiger cadres and that they had recovered a firearm from them. Following the incident, soldiers cordoned the villages Killiveddy and Menkamam and conducted house-to-house search operation.

Meanwhile, in Batticaloa unidentified men who had come on a motorcycle threw a grenade at a police sentry post at Kallady, a suburb of the eastern town, around 9.50 p.m., Sunday (8). The grenade exploded in front of the sentry and no damage or injury was sustained. In separate incident at Pioneer Road in Batticaloa, unidentified men threw grenade at the house of a Tamil businessman, K.Nallaratanam. The blast caused damage to front part of the house. The police blamed the Tamil Tigers for the grenade attacks.

Army patrol ambushed: Jan 9 - A soldier was killed and an army sergeant seriously injured when an army patrol was ambushed by suspected LTTE cadres at Mainathivu in Trincomalee on Sunday (8) night, police said. The body of army private Ranjith Kumara 22 of Balangoda is at the Muttur hospital mortuary while the sergeant with head injuries was rushed to the Trincomalee hospital. According to reports one of the attackers was also killed when the troops returned fire. During a search operation launched soon after a machine gun was recovered from the scene.

Maize vendor shot in Akkaraipattu: Jan 9 - Mr Ratnam Karunakaran, 32, also known as Sinappodiyan, was shot and seriously injured by unknown gunmen on Monday (9) evening 3.30 p.m. at Piscal Junction, a predominantly Muslim area in Akkaraipattu along the Akkaraipattu-Kalmunai main Road in eastern Sri Lanka. Karunakaran was selling maize at the time gunmen shot him. Karunakaran was initially rushed to the Akkaraipattu Hospital and later transferred to Kalmunai Base Hospital.

Youth shot dead in Jaffna: Jan 9 - Pancharatnam Pranavan, 24, was shot dead by unknown gunmen in front of a video store located in Aadiyapatham Road that links Thirunieveeli and Kalviyankadu near Jaffna town Monday at 2 p.m., sources in Jaffna said. Pranavan was followed by the gunmen while he was on his way to obtain copies of video tapes. Kopay Police has transferred Pranavan's body to Jaffna Teaching Hospital for post-mortem examinations. Meanwhile, Hamilton Mariyaseelan (29) was abducted from his home at night on Monday (9). Unidentified persons holding guns and their faces covered with black clothes reportedly entered the home of Mariyaseelan in Vaddappulam in Ilavalai in Jaffna while the occupants were asleep.

Bullet-riddled bodies of two policemen found - Police on 9 January discovered the bullet riddled corpses of two men dumped near a half dug grave at the Panichchakulam cemetery, Kandapuram in Vavuniya in northern Sri Lanka. Both corpses had gunshot injuries and had been brought to the cemetery after the two men were killed elsewhere police said. Those who had brought the corpses to the cemetery may have left them near the half dug grave probably as they could not bury the corpses before daylight fell, police said. Later it was revealed that the bodies have been identified as of two soldiers stationed at the Murrukkan Army camp. They are M.P.R. Dharmasena and R.M. Ranatunge residents of Nawalapitiya and Nikawaratiya respectively who went missing while they were on their way back to the Murrukkan camp. Police suspect that they were kidnapped by the LTTE, killed and the bodies dumped at the graveyard.

Two soldiers injured in ambush: Jan 10 - Two soldiers were injured Tuesday (10) morning 8.30 am. when suspected Tamil Tiger gunmen ambushed and shot at a SLA foot patrol at Punanai in Valaichenai along the Batticaloa-Polannaruwa highway at the 18th mile post, police sources said. SLA soldiers returned fire and the gunmen withdrew from the area. Injured army soldiers were rushed Welikanda hospital.

Shop owner shot dead: Jan 11 - P. Umasankar, 28, from Meesalai and owner of a clothing shop in Chavakacheri town in northern Jaffna was shot dead at 5.30 p.m. Tuesday (10) on Dutch Road by unidentified gunmen. Umasankar, originally from Erlalai in Valigamam, was displaced from his home town, married and settled in Meesalai. Sivasankar closed his shop after business on Tuesday and was going towards his home when the gunmen following on a motorbike shot him before escaping from the scene. Umasankar is survived by his 27-year-old-wife Sudharshini and 7-year-old son Kiri.

Abducted woman killed: Jan 11 - Unknown gunmen shot and killed a 31-years-old woman in Thenmaradchi on Wednesday (11) noon at the grounds of Panrithalaichi Amman Temple. The victim, Pavalarani, was reportedly abducted from her house in Mattuvil East, 6 km north of Chavakacheri, on Tuesday morning by the gunmen. The victim, Miss Pavalarani Kanapathipillai, was employed in Chavakacheri Divisional Secretariat as Samurddhi Development Official for the past 5 years. It has been reported that Pavalarani, the only breadwinner in the family of two younger sisters and the mother was killed by the Tamil Tigers because the victim obtained her job with the help of EPDP leader Douglas Devananda who is a Minister.

Trader shot dead: Jan 11 - Thambu Nadesu, who ran a business near the Puthur junction on the Jaffna-Point Pedro road was shot dead and later his body was found in a banana field near the Amman temple in Siruppittai along the Puthur-Nilavarai road. A TamilNet report, quoting local villagers, said that shooting was carried out by security forces.

Two de-mining workers abducted: Jan 11 - Two de-mining workers, Thambiah Tharmasiri and Narayanamoorthy Kandeepan, employed by the humanitarian Danish De-mining Group, DDG, were abducted on their way to work at 5:20 am in their motorbikes by unknown armed men who came in a white Hiace van Wednesday (11) early morning in Point Pedro. The abduction occurred close to the Sri Lanka Army's (SLA's) High Security Zone (HSZ) about 100 meters from the SLA 52-4 Brigade camp in the area while travelling to work in Kuppilan, close to the High Security Zone near the Palaly Military Base. Four workers of another De-mining group, HALO Trust, also have been earlier reported to be missing and the suspicion is that they also have been abducted. HALO Trust recently suspended its operations last month following the reported an incident where its premises were broken into and de-mining data maps and computer equipment were taken away in two vehicles belonging to the Trust which later resumed operations.

Civilian shot dead in retaliation: Jan 11 - Sri Lanka Army soldiers opened fire in Kokkuvil, Jaffna, killing a civilian traveller on Jaffna KKS Road around 7:00 pm Wednesday (11). The SLA soldiers opened fire after two soldiers were wounded in a grenade attack. The victim is yet to be identified, according to medical sources.

Army retaliates following grenade attacks: Jan 12 - Five civilians, including a 60-year-old mother, and a 71-year-old man were wounded in Sri Lanka Army soldiers' retaliatory fire after two grenade attacks at the SLA troopers and policemen manning the checkpoints at two separate junctions in the suburbs of Jaffna

town Thursday (12) morning. Three policemen and an SLA soldier were injured in the grenade attacks that took place at Parameswara and Thatatheru junctions.

Three policemen were injured in the first attack at Parameswara junction on the Palaly road when suspected Tamil Tigers threw a grenade at them, around 11:00 a.m. Wounded policemen, M. Piyaratne, 45, V. Ariawanse, 38, and Anuratne, 36, were brought to the Jaffna teaching hospital. The injured four civilians have been identified as: Nageswari Suganthini, 28, from Sabapathy Lane in Kokuvil, Visuwanathar Kathirgamalingam, 60, Murugesu Suntharalingam, a traveller from Karainagar and a 16-year-old boy Tharmalingam Rajakumar. An SLA soldier was injured in the second attack that took place at Thatatheru junction on the KKS road, around 11:10 a.m. A 71-year old civilian, N. Satchithanathan, who lives close to Jaffna Hindu College, was wounded in SLA soldiers' retaliatory fire and rushed to Jaffna Hospital.

9 Navy men killed, 10 wounded in mine attack: Jan 12 - Nine Sri Lanka Navy sailors were killed and ten wounded when their bus hit a Claymore mine in Chettikulam Thursday (12) evening around 4:20 pm. The attack took place on Madawachi-Mannar Road. A Sinhala home guard was reported killed and a Muslim youth was wounded in SLN gunfire following the attack. Sri Lanka Army soldiers who cordoned off and searched the area have attacked civilian residents in Veerapuram village located close to the site of explosion. A Sinhala home guard, H. Jeyasinghe, 50, was killed and a Muslim youth, Mohammed Naffar, was wounded in the gunfire by SLN personnel following the Claymore attack. Tension prevails in the area.

Abducted school girl returned to parents: Jan 12 - The Jaffna school girl reportedly abducted by four Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers from Paalpannai (Milk Farm) Road in between Thirunelvely and Kondavil junction was returned to her parents in Kondavil on Tuesday (10) night by senior officers of the SLA. The abducted girl is sixteen years old and said to be a GCE (Ordinary Level) student at a popular Kondavil mixed school, residents said. She was on her way to her aunt's house and was riding a bicycle along Paalpannai road when she was reportedly taken away by SLA soldiers.

Soldier killed in Mallakam grenade attack: Jan 13 - One Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldier was killed when suspected LTTE assassins hurled a hand grenade at the troops in Mallakam junction in Vallikamam at 3.45 p.m. Friday (13). One civilian was injured when SLA troops returned fire. There were two incidents of grenade explosions in Irupalai on Jaffna-Point Pedro Road at 5 p.m. Friday. The unknown gunmen followed the explosion with gunfire before escaping from the area.

24 Mannar Tamils seek refuge in Tamil Nadu: Jan 13 - A group of twenty four Tamils including nine children from Selvapuram and Olathoduvai in Mannar district reached Rameswaram coast in Ramanathapuram Thursday, a daily in Tamil Nadu said. The influx has begun after a lapse of three years and refugees said threat of war, and harassment by the Sri Lanka armed forces after the recent attack on Sri Lanka Navy as the reasons for deciding to leave Sri Lanka shores, the paper said. A boat operator had dropped the refugees near Arichalmunai at 3 a.m. on Thursday, and security forces at a checkpoint intercepted the refugees Thursday morning, the paper quoted police sources as saying. The refugees were taken to Thanushkodi police station for inquiries, the paper said. P Sudan, 23, was a second-time refugee having been an inmate of the Thiruvadhavur refugee camp in Madurai in 1990. With increasing tension in Mannar and surrounding areas the paper says there is bound to be additional influx of refugees.

Ex-Razeek group cadre shot dead: Jan 13 - Unidentified gunmen shot and killed reportedly a former cadre of the 'Razeek Group', Sinnavan, Friday (13) at 10:45 a.m. at Kallady, 2 km south of Batticaloa town. Arulampalam Suntharalingam, 33, known as Sinnavan, was gunned down by two suspected LTTE gunmen in front of a motorbike repair shop on Batticaloa - Kalmunai Road. The leader of the Razeek Group, Mr. Sivaguru Navaratnarajah, 38, known as 'Kanthi', was killed in a grenade attack by suspected LTTE attackers on 14 September 2005 inside the high security zone in Batticaloa town where Razeek group's well fortified military camp attached to Sri Lanka Army base at Lake Road is located.

Brick quarry worker shot dead: Jan 13 - Mr Sulaimanlebbai Mohammed Esmail, 33, a worker at a brick quarry in Nainakaddu Sammanthurai in Kalmunai was shot dead by unknown gunmen on Thursday (12) night at 11-00 pm while he was sleeping in a shed near the quarry.

Meanwhile, unknown assailants hurled a grenade at the house of a businessman located at 2nd division Puliyady Road Valaichenai on Friday (13) early morning at 4-30 a.m. The grenade failed to explode.

Policeman and two civilians injured in grenade attack: Jan 13 - One Sri Lanka Police officer, Mr Piyantha, 46, was seriously injured in Nallur, Jaffna Aadiyapatham Road, Old junction when suspected Tamil Tigers hurled a grenade at the officer on patrol at 11.50 am on Friday 13.. Two youths from Neervely, P Anushan, 23, and R Ravi, 21, who were riding on a bicycle were also injured in the explosion. All three have been admitted to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital, medical sources said.

Meanwhile, on the same day at about 2.30 pm there was another grenade attack at the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) sentry in Aanaikottai, Jaffna. No injuries are reported from this incident. SLA troopers have cordoned off and are conducting searches in the area.

Dry ration to families affected by fishing ban: Jan 13 - Jaffna District Government Agent Mr.K.Ganesh is reportedly preparing to supply dry ration relief for the several hundreds fisher families who are economically crippled by the fishing ban imposed by the Sri Lanka security forces in several parts of the Jaffna district. Mr.K.Ganesh has directed Divisional Secretaries of Vadamarachchi North, Velanai, Point Pedro, Chankanai and Sandilipai to send reports immediately regarding the number fisher families affected by fishing ban.

Two LTTE fighters killed: Jan 14 - The Liberation Tigers on Saturday (14) said two of their fighters, a Lieutenant and a Second Lieutenant were killed Friday (13) evening when a minicamp located in the LTTE held Kadavanaikulam area in Trincomalee district was attacked by a group of around 50 soldiers of the Sri Lanka Army, according to the LTTE's Trincomalee Political office. The LTTE Political Head in Trincomalee, Mr. S. Elilan has reportedly lodged a complaint with details with the SLMM. Lt. Kumuthan (Tharmalingam Sureshrooban) from 7th District in Kaddaiparichan and 2nd Lt. Yasho (Nagarajah Irasan) from 3rd Colony in Kiliveddy, were the LTTE fighters who were killed when they defended the LTTE minicamp from the SLA soldiers, according to the LTTE sources. The said that the remaining cadres who relocated to a safe location in the LTTE controlled area have established communication and contact with the LTTE command.

SLMM office attacked in Batticaloa: Jan 14 - Unidentified attackers lobbed a grenade at the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) office located on Lake Road in Batticaloa Friday (13) night around 11:30 p.m. No one was wounded in the attack, Batticaloa Police said. Three vehicles parked outside the SLMM office were damaged in the attack.

Blast kills SLN sailor, injures 3: Jan 14 - A Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) personnel was killed and three others were seriously injured in a roadside blast in Kayts, an island north-west of Jaffna town, around 1.30 p.m., Saturday (14). The sailors were on a road patrol in the area when the mine went off, according to military sources

in the northern town. More SLN troops have been deployed in the area and a search operation is underway, civilians sources said. The injured SLN personnel have been transported to Palaly military base hospital.

Four injured in grenade attack on family: Jan 14 - All the members of a Tamil family were wounded in a grenade attack in Trincomalee on Saturday (14) evening. An unidentified attacker lobbed a grenade into the front verandah of the house located in Gandhinagar, 3 km southwest of the east port town, when the entire family, a father, mother and their two children, was watching a television programme following Pongal celebrations, police sources said. One of the injured Ms Rajeswary is a dispenser in the UC Ayurveda Dispensary. Her husband has sustained serious injuries, hospital sources said.

Civilian shot dead in Batticaloa: Jan 14 - Mr Raman Ranjan, 36, was shot dead by unknown gunmen who came in a motorbike at Karuwappankerny near Naagathampiran temple in Batticaloa at 5.00 p.m. Saturday (14). Rajan is a resident of Aaraiyampathy Batticaloa and came to celebrate Pongal with his relatives in Karuwappankerny when he was killed. The gunmen escaped in their motorbike after firing at Mr Ranjan in close range.

Two soldiers injured in grenade attack: Jan 14 - Two soldiers sustained minor injuries when unknown assailants hurled a grenade at a SLA road clearing patrol in Arumugathankudiyiruppu in Eravur along the Batticaloa-Valaichenai highway at 1.30 p.m. Saturday (14) SLA arrested three Tamil youths as suspects.

Abducted man found shot dead: Jan 15 - Tharmarasan Tharmaseelan, 37, who was abducted by unidentified men Saturday (14) night, was found shot dead on the following morning with his hands tied behind near a Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) check post in Kayts town, north-west of Jaffna. Tharmarasan was visiting his friend when four men, alleged by the LTTE of being members of the EPDP and Sri Lanka Navy entered the house and took him away. Tharmarasan, father of five, is from Pandaitarippu.

Youth shot dead: Jan 15 - Sellathurai Yogarajah, 26, who was on his way to a Hindu temple in Kodikamam, in Thenmaradchi in Jaffna district, was shot and killed allegedly by Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers in Thenmaradchi Sunday (15) around 8:30 a.m. The victim's body was found on Varani North lane near Suttupuram Amman temple located in Kudamiyan.

Four in family injured in grenade explosion: Jan 15 - Mr.Mahinda Balasuriya, Senior Deputy Inspector of Police in charge of North-East Province and Anuradhapura district has ordered full investigation into the grenade explosion in a residential quarter of the Trincomalee Urban Council (UC) which caused serious injuries to a whole Tamil family Saturday (15) evening. The UC residential quarters' complex is located between Abeyapura, Sinhala settlement and Anpuvullipuram, Tamil settlement on Trincomalee-Kandy main road, about three km off west south of east port town. The injured have been identified as Ms R.Rajeswary, a dispenser in UC Ayurveda Dispensary (35), her husband Mr.Rajkumar (35) and their two children, Ms Sai Vithiya (10) and Vithiyakaran (4). They are now warded in the Trincomalee general hospital. The police who rushed to the scene of the explosion had said that the grenade which was inside the house had exploded and it was not thrown from outside. But this claim had been disputed.

Three women shot dead: Jan 16 - Two young sisters, Bojan Renuka, 30, and Bojan Shanuka, 23, and their mother Bojan Arthanageswary, 51, residents of a house in Mudaliyar Kanagasabai Road in Manipay, close to the Manipay Hindu College, Jaffna district, were shot dead Sunday (15) night at 11.45 p.m. by unidentified. The father, Nagendran Bojan, 55, and brother Bojan Ullasan, 26, sustained gunshot injuries and are receiving treatment at the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. The gunmen shot the victims as they were coming down the stairs from upper floor of a two-storeyed house. Bojans are a LTTE 'maaveerar family' and

(continued on page 41)

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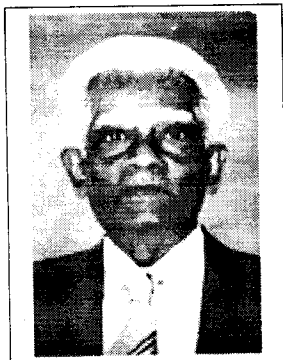
In Remembrance of the Late Mr. Aloysius Ratnasingham



Mr. Aloysius Ratnasingham, born 29th September 1927; husband of Lynette, loving father of Kulendran, Sylveryn and Sheryn; father-in-law of Sharmini, Ruvan de Soysa and Lorenzo Schiavone; cherished grandfather of Cameron; brother of Suhirtham, Julianna, the late Rasam, Rose and Pushpam passed away on 13th December 2005. Entombment took place at Holy Cross Cemetery on 17th December 2005.

The family wishes to thank all relatives and friends who sent messages of condolences, flowers and also donations to the Providence Centre in Toronto, Canada.

A requiem mass in memory of Aloy will be offered at Saint Mary's Cathedral in Jaffna, followed by lunch to the residents of Saint Joseph Home for the Elders at Holy Cross Convent on Beach Road in Columbuthurai, Jaffna



Mr. Velautham Tharumalingam (Advocate/Attorney-At-Law), beloved husband of Elizabeth (Former staff of Good Shepherd Convent, Kotahena), loving father of Dr. Puvu of New Zealand, Dr. Angela, Shirani of UK, Gerard, Savithri, Anton and Marina of Canada, Father-in-Law of Dr. Collins (NZ), Dr. Kulanthaivelu, Joy Theophilus UK), Charmaine, Joseph Dunston, Malarvili and Justin (CAN) passed away peacefully on

20th December 2005 and the funeral took place on 28th December 2005 in Canada.

The family wishes to thank all those who attended the funeral, sent messages of

sympathies and floral tributes and assisted in many ways during this period of sadness.

Angela Kulanthaivelu
01924 871012

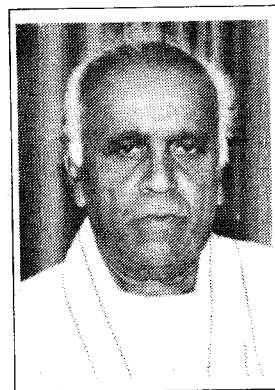
IN MEMORIAM**Sixth Year Remembrance**

In loving memory of **Mrs Sivapackiyam Muthukumaramy** who passed away on 8th January 2000.

**This winter of winters goes on without you.
The summer sun will not shine for us again.
In this world, you live on in our hearts,
And there, for ever, you shall remain.**

A wonderful woman who truly lived her life, she is now and for ever missed and remembered by her loving husband, Mr. Muthukumaramy, children, grandchildren and in laws.

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Fourth Year Remembrance

In loving memory of **Mr. Rasiah Kandiah**, retired Principal, Kokuvil Ramakrishna Saiva Vidyalayam and Navatkuli Maha Vidyalayam who passed away on 21st January 2002.

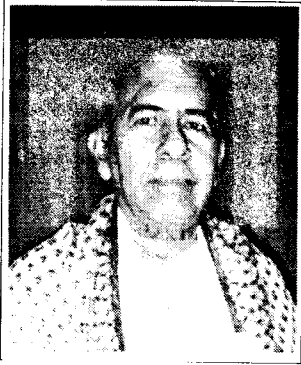
**We try to hold on to times of happiness,
But they prove to be as fleeting as the wind.
Instead we have our memories of days gone by
And keep them safe, ever treasured, within.**

Beloved husband of retired teacher, Somamma, a loving father and father-in-law, a great and wise grandfather, a noble friend to many, a man whom the world shall never forget.

-'Yart', 5 Lower Sand Hills, Long Ditton, Surrey KT6 6RP.

First Year Remembrance

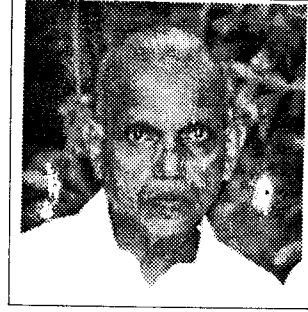
29/05/1920 - 19/12/2004



In ever loving memory of **Mr. M. Arumugam**, Retired Chief Accountant of Police Department, Colombo and former President of Sivathondan Nilayam UK, on the first anniversary of his passing away on the 19th of December 2004. Sadly missed by wife, children, and sons in law, daughters in law, grand children, relatives and friends.

52 Kingsley Road, Wimbledon,
London SW19 8HF
Tel: 020 8543 2126, 020 8540 0104

Second Year Remembrance



In ever loving memory of **Mr. Sithamparanathan Vadivpillai** of 45 Chetty Street, Nallur, Jaffna on the second anniversary of his passing away on 6th January 2004

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his loving children Satchithanathan, Sithamparanathan and Damayanthi; sister Kamaladevy; sons-in-law Elango and Kuheswaran; daughters-in-law Kesari and Uthaya; brother-in-law Kandiah and grandchildren Sutharshini and Sujeevan

- 120/3 Galle Road, Dehiwela,
Sri Lanka.

Anniversary Remembrance

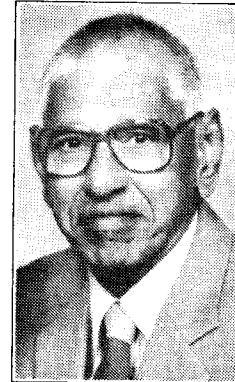


In loving memory of **Mrs Ganeswary Tharmalingam** of Kondavil East, Jaffna on the thirteenth anniversary of her passing away on 21st January 1993.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by her loving husband Tharmalingam; children Brabalini, Bremjit and Ranjit; son-in-law Dr. W.N. Linganandhan; daughters-in-law Dr. Vani Bremjit and Shamini Ranjit; grandchildren Abhirami, Sathya, Praneeta, Prasheeda, Prashoban, Praveen and Anjana.

- 5 Beaulieu Boulevard, Beaulieu Park,
Chelmsford, Essex CM1 6EA.
Tel: 01245 466363.

Sixth Year Remembrance



In ever loving memory of **Mr. Gregory Joseph**, formerly of Cement Corporation (Kankesanthurai and Puttalam) and of Nigeria on the sixth anniversary of his passing away on 18th January 2000.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his loving wife Erin, children Dr. Eugene, Enakshi and Hyacinthe; daughter-in-law Dr. Shamini; son-in-law Paul Wood and daughter-in-law Noeline.

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6. Thai Poosam
8. Eekathasi; Feast of St. Jerome Emiliani

10. Pirathosam; Feast of St. Scholastica
11. Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes
12. Full moon
15. Sankadakara Sathurthi
21. Feast of St. Peter Damian; Ash Wednesday
23. Feast of St. Poly Carp
24. Eekathasi
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Karnatic Vocal Recital by Dr. John R. Marr

Reviewed by M.B. Rajani



What a remarkable recital it was! I am sure all those who heard Dr. John Marr on December 18th 2005 at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, London, perform a Karnatic music vocal recital would be struck with awe and deep admiration. Music has been his very special interest and passion all his life. I believe his Mother used to say that he sang even before he talked!

A truly devoted student of music and an exceptionally inspiring teacher is Dr. Marr. There were a few

people in the audience who heard him perform last in 1974 at the International Tamil Conference in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. It is indeed a very rare and unique event as it is not very often that he has sung in public. On Dec. 18th he stunned several people who knew him for years: his family, friends and students, when they saw what he could do. Karnatic music to him has not been a hobby or side interest but a deep-rooted passion and a subject for perpetual research. He is a scholar who over the years has studied deeply to understand the system and complexities of the subject that is so dear to him.

Dr. Marr's companionship with Indian music began at age 16, while at school. As a result of his interest he joined the then-running Indian Army Cadet scheme and went to India for the first time in August 1946 and was stationed in Bangalore which directed his interest in Indian music towards classical Karnatic music, and this has stayed with him ever since. He was then posted to Jabalpur in Feb 1947 where a number of the jawans and officers were from South India and helped him considerably over both South Indian music, Tamil and Telugu. He was posted to an Indian Army Ordnance Vehicle Company in Burma in May 1947. He and his colleagues celebrated Indian and Pakistan Independence on August 15 1947 at Mingaladon, Burma and he there sang South Indian music in public for the first time! He acquired a large number of 78 rpm Karnatic music records while in the Army. He has them still. After leaving the army in Sept 1948 he enrolled at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, where he initially studied Telugu, Indian music and Archaeology, proceeding to a Degree course in Tamil and Sanskrit in 1949.

His formal education in Karnatic Music began in 1950 when he was awarded a Vacation scholarship by Annamalai University through the Indian High Commission in London to study music. This enabled him to study first-hand under the renowned vocalist Sri Chittoor Subramaniam. After he graduated at SOAS in 1953, he was married and together with his wife Wendy went to India in Nov 1953, as he had been awarded an ex-Service scholarship to work towards a PhD. They were in Annamalai University and Madras for the next year, his research being on early Tamil Sangam literature. He was able further to study music with Sri Subramaniam and other teachers at Annamalai and, in Madras under the distinguished singer and scholar Sri Mudikondan Venkatarama Iyer, then Principal of the Music Academy Madras's College. Their eldest son, James was born in Madras in June 1954. They returned to UK in October 1954. He was appointed lecturer in Tamil at SOAS in Autumn 1955 and held this post till retirement in Sept 1992, though in the meantime his responsibilities had expanded to include South Indian

music and Indian art and archaeology.

He known Bhavan, UK since the early '70s. In January 1992 he was asked by Bhavan's resident teacher of Karnatic Music, Smt. Sivasakti Sivanesan, to teach the theory component of Bhavan's 5-Year Diploma in Karnatic Music, which he has been doing ever since. Mrs. Wendy Marr and he annually teach a Diploma Course in the Art and Archaeology of the Indian sub-continent at the London Bhavan.

He started his recital in the traditional way by singing in praise of Lord Ganecā: Ūrimahāgan?apatir avatu mām, a composition of Muttuswami Dikshitar in Sanskrit in Gaul?a rāga and Tripud?a tāla. There followed Nī daya rāda? (Telugu) in Vasantabhairavi rāga and Rūpaka tāla by Tyāgarāja. His expressive improvisation in the Ālāpana and Svara strikingly adorned this beautiful composition. Bālagopāla (Sanskrit) of Dikshitar in Bhairavi rāga and Ādi tāla was one of the main pieces in this programme. In this, as in the rest of the programme, he impressed us all with correctness and clarity of his pronunciation. He sang this at the request of his theory student Saranya: an example of an inspiring teacher. He always encourages a positive idea and does his best to remove hurdles that come in the way of one who wants to learn. He does his best to raise their spirit. It was his instinct that made him compose Kāmākshi (Telugu) in Tod?i rāga and Chāpu tāla because he did not approve of this reviewer being told by somebody that Todi was too difficult for her! He chose Kāmākshidāsa as his signature for his compositions.

Sarasasāmadāna (Telugu) of Tyāgarāja was the central piece of the programme and exhibited Dr. Marr's immense potential in improvisation. The combination of decorative Kāpinārāyan?i rāga and Deūādi tāla brought together a wonderful musical conversation in Ālāpana, Svara and Niraval between the singer and violinist Balu Raghuraman, resident Violin teacher at the Bhavan, UK, who accompanied and supported the Dr. Marr magnificently. This piece gave a brilliant opportunity for a rhythmic conversation after kalpana svaram between M. Balachandar, Bhavan's resident teacher for South Indian percussion, on Mridangam, and his student Anand Bremkumar on Ghatam. They both very admirably supported the whole programme, together with Mrs. Candida Connolly who played the Tambura. Suddhānanda Bhārati's Jankāra sruti (Tamil) is such a relevant piece for the occasion, which describes the divine sounds in nature and in music created by Lord Ūiva. It is expressively set in Pūrvikalyān?i rāga and Ādi tāla and was movingly presented. The last two were light pieces' firstly a Kannada piece Devakinandana hare, a composition by Purandaradāsa, and Santāna saubhāgya (Sanskrit). The latter's melody was originally European, one of the many that were taken into the Karnatic music repertoire in the early nineteenth century. Dr. Marr learnt this piece from one of his music theory students and friends, Sinduja Paraparan, who was 10 when she thought it to him!

The success of the programme was due to the wonderful combination of the all the musicians. Their skills and brilliant understanding of their part in the recital were confirmed by the fact that they rehearsed together only once before the programme. I had the wonderful opportunity of listening to Dr. Marr practising at home several times. It never was the same twice: his keen practice in Manodharma or improvisation meant that the ālāpana, svara, niraval and sangati came out differently every time. Each time I waited with the question in my mind: what is he going to do this time? It was a challenge to accompanying artistes, which they met with amazing verve. I thank Bhavan for giving us such a treat and Mathoorji who concluded the programme with a special vote of thanks that included an invitation to Dr. Marr to perform in Bangalore! I thank Karnatic Vocal/Theory students and their parents for helping with the organisation of the programme. □

Tamil Performing Arts Society's Drama Festival -2005

- Review of three Tamil plays directed by K.Balendra

I have been to plays presented by the Tamil Performing Arts Society when they were staged as a part of a programme organised by some associations. However, it was only when, under the auspices of the Lewisham Tamil School, they presented the Drama Festival 2005 at the Lewisham Sivan Temple Hall, I had the opportunity to see their three plays at a stretch on the same day, I was able to appreciate and enjoy the full impact of the different dimensions in the themes and theatre techniques that their plays manifest.

The first play staged was Chellian's "Perunkaithadal", which (loosely translated) means "Lofty Talks". This play portrays the people who think of themselves as belonging to the category of top notch intellectuals and lead a pretentious life believing that only they have the academic acumen to understand and appreciate the deeper and finer aspects of philosophy and phenomena, be it in society, politics or art. Their view is that such appreciation and understanding is completely beyond the comprehension of the average human being. They have trapped themselves in their own pretentious world so much so that they will not even admit to things that they do not really comprehend, lest their intellectuality be doubted. The pretence and absurdities of such people have been beautifully portrayed by the simple but effective instrument of modern art.

The second play was "The Emperors New Clothes". Many may have read this story either in Tamil or English during their school days. It is about a foolish emperor who is duped by three deceivers who claim that they are capable of making a unique robe that is visible only to the eyes of the intelligent. Though no one can see the robe (because it doesn't actually exist!), everyone claims that they can see it and express its beauty lest they be branded fools.

At the end of the play, the emperor goes out parading his "robe" with the three deceivers also in the procession. It was left to a small boy, who did not have to feign his intelligence, to openly point out that the emperor has no clothes on. When the emperor hears this, he pauses for a few seconds and after a brief look around, orders the procession to proceed. The director's stamp was evident on that scene with the boy acting as emperor playing his part well.

This story was adapted for the stage by Mavai Nithyanandan. Balendra directed this play skilfully using young students from the London Tamil Drama School who put on a splendid performance. The back drop of enchanting songs and music was an added treat while also helping to move the play forward.

It is a notable feature that despite the fact that most of the young people who acted in this play must have been born and bred here, they delivered their dialogue very well, with the cor-

rect pronunciation and brought the 'bavas' into their acting.

The third play is S. Vasuthevan's "Kathiruppu" which means "Waiting". It centres on the turmoil that two parents undergo after the disappearance of their son in the war in Sri Lanka. The mother lives in hope that one day her son will return and spends her life in utter sorrow. Anantharane Balendra splendidly portrayed the agony and the anguish of the mother. The dialogue was realistic when in their state of helplessness and hopelessness they blame each other for his disappearance. Mano Manuvetpillai, as the father, did very well too. When he came to know that his son was dead, not wanting to shatter the hopes of his wife who is living in the belief that he is still alive, he plunges into despair not knowing how to break the news to her. He played that part very well and involuntarily tears welled in my eyes.

The plays presented that day had three different themes and the director Balendra has employed different drama techniques to present them. By his deft direction and presentation, he made it not only aesthetically enjoyable but also ensured the messages

reached the audience.

It was only that day it came to my knowledge that Balendra, ably supported by his wife Ananadarane (who is a meritorious actor and a well known broadcaster), is conducting weekly classes for young Tamils in the name of London Drama School. This is a noble and a yeoman service rendered to the second generation Tamils living in London. When one learns dance or musical instruments, there is neither the opportunity nor the need to speak the Tamil language fluently. The nuances of the Tamil language and the exact meaning of the words will be learnt when it has to be delivered with expressions in a drama.

The days programme also had a light music recital. The songs were meaningful verses written by Sri Lankan Tamil poets that had been made into melodies. Before the performance of each song, Anantharane Balendra's reading of a few lines of the verses rendered an added flavour to the songs. The technique of alternating between prose and singing, when rendering some songs, gave more life and strength to the verses.

The Tamil Performing Arts Society are able to stage for many years, without being weary or frustrated, dramas that are of a very high standard, employing new theatre techniques, providing a treat for the eyes and the intellect and at the same time deftly conveying social messages to the audience. This in itself is a great achievement for the Tamil Performing Arts Society in general and to the couple Balendra and Anantharane in particular. Their endeavours to bring the Sri Lankan Tamil poets and their poems to the limelight by giving them song form are also laudable. Added to this is their constructive and noble service to the second generation children in educating them in theatre and music and through these the Tamil language. Theirs is a noble service that deserves praise, appreciation and support by all the Tamils.

— A. SIVAPATHASUNDARAM

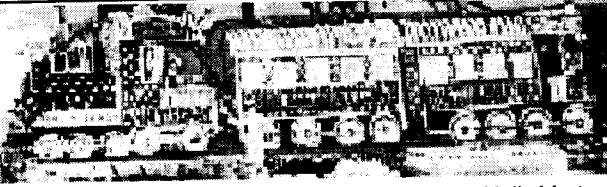


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Christmas & 10th Anniversary Celebrations of The Sri Lanka Railway Past-Employees Welfare Association



Took place at Squadron Air Training Corp Hall, Merton Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 on Saturday, 10th December 2005. The proceedings commenced with the ceremonial lighting of the Christmas Tree by the Vice-President Mr. P. Gnanaandan and a brief reference by Master. Kevin on the significance of Christmas. This was followed by the singing of Carols by senior ladies

Thereafter the President, Mr. S. Ponnudurai welcomed the members and guests and thanked them for their presence in large numbers. Mr. A. Manikkam cut the specially prepared cake akin to a railway train and shown above. Mr. Ponnudurai cut the Christmas cake.

The audience were entertained by a Bharatha Natya Dance by Miss. Kenisha (Gopika) Mendis which was greatly appreciated and Gopika was presented with a bouquet of flowers by

Appeal for Assistance for Launch of Cancer Hospice at Maruthanamadam, Jaffna

While the Sinhala and Tamil politicians of Ceylon are busily fighting about the division of districts and provinces, a humanitarian organisation called and known as 'Cancer Aid for North/East (Sri Lanka) - CANE-, 184 Acton Lane, London W4 5DL. Tel: 020 8932 0000; Fax: 020 8987 9000; email : caneuk@hotmail.co.uk is making arrangements to open a Cancer Hospice in Jaffna for the cancer patients who are terminally ill and therefore in need of palliative care and counselling. Facilities for palliative care for terminally ill cancer patients in a home setting never existed in the North and East of Sri Lanka. Cancer Aid for North/East (Sri Lanka) which was established twelve years ago in London has been doing yeoman service to the cancer patients of Jaffna, Trincomalee and Batticaloa during the last twelve years, by providing financial and other assistance to the poor and disabled cancer patients who were experiencing difficulty in receiving treatment at Maharagama Cancer Hospital. Sometime in the year 2002, the members of CANE decided to set up a Cancer Hospice in Jaffna for those cancer patients who were terminally ill and cannot be treated but needed palliative care. During a charity event held in 2002, CANE made an appeal to the wider community in England to contribute their mite towards setting up the urgently needed Cancer Hospice in Jaffna. This appeal was followed by many other fund raising events and a

good number of individuals and Voluntary Organisations came forward and gave their financial, medical and moral support towards building a Cancer Hospice in Maruthanamadam, Jaffna. It is significant to note that CANE has received support

Mrs Orissa de Silva, Secretary to the High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in the United Kingdom.

At this stage, the President called upon, Mr. Balasundram, the Editor to conduct the rest of the programme. Mr. Balasundram said that the meeting was a significant occasion to thank and honour two senior members, Messers A. Manikkam and S. Ponnudurai who had rendered yeoman service by initiating and forming the association as early as June 1995 and guiding them for ten years. He handed over Certificates of Merit and a replica of a Pullman Train and a Flying Scotsman Silver plated Model respectively to them.

The next item was the release of the 8th edition of the Annual Journal by the Editor, Mr. M. Balasundram. He then introduced Mr. N. S. Kandiah of the Tamil Times, who had accepted the invitation to receive the first copy of the Journal. Mr. Kandiah receiving the Journal thanked the Editor and the members of the Association for inviting him and his wife to partake of the celebrations and complimented the Editor for producing and publishing a wide variety of very useful information for the members and the public in general.

Thereafter, all present adjourned for a delicious meal of Fried rice and curry after which there was the raffle draw with attractive and expensive prizes and Tombola (Bingo) with similar prizes. Santa Claus appeared and distributed presents to the children

Thus ended a memorable celebration which was enjoyed by all present.

from a few non-Tamil charities also. The Duchess of Norfolk has donated a considerable sum of money to put up a new building in the Hospice premises to house the Day Centre for the cancer patients. In addition she has also volunteered to furnish the Day Centre with fixtures and fittings. The opening of the Cancer Hospice in Jaffna has been scheduled for the 28th of January 2006. A couple of members of CANE are already in Jaffna for the launch of the opening ceremony. Mr. Sabanayagam has been at the site of the Hospice in Jaffna to ensure a smooth launch of the opening ceremony.

Dr. Meera Rajasekeran who is a practising specialist in palliative care from London is already in Sri Lanka actively involved in setting up the Hospice, besides training and educating the nurses and doctors who have been recruited to work in the Cancer Hospice

The members of the Executive Committee of CANE cordially invite the Tamil Community in London and Sri Lanka to attend the launch on the 28th of January 2006 and give solace, support and succour to the suffering cancer patients of North and East Sri Lanka

Though CANE feel proud that it has been able to build the Cancer Hospice with the help of well wishers, yet they are concerned that it would be impossible to ensure the smooth running of the Hospice without the steady and sure flow of funds

The Treasurer of CANE has estimated that the Hospice would require at least Two thousand and five hundred pounds (£ 2500) every month to keep the Hospice running smoothly.

The executive committee of CANE appeals to all those who care for cancer patients to do their best in their own way to help the suffering cancer patients of North and East Sri Lanka.

For details please contact Dr. Thayalasekeram Tel: 020 8550 6328 or

Dr. Namasivayam Tel: 020 8505 4725

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Dr. Ramadoss wins Prestigious Award



Dr. V. Ramadoss, Technical Advisor to the Seychelles Ministry of Health and Social Affairs has been awarded the coveted Indian Overseas Award for the year 2006. It is an annual award given by the Government of India since 2003 for exemplary community service in the land they live in.

Dr. Ramadoss, the third Tamil to win the award is one of the fifteen selected from the global Indian community and the presentation by the President of India took place at Hyderabad on 9th January at an impressive august assembly of the global non-resident Indian community.

Since 1997, Dr. Ramadoss on his own volition has been generously donating sophisticated life saving equipments such as CT scan machinery to the Health Ministry that has gone a long way to improve and sustain the health and welfare of the community.

Australian Newsletter

Australia witnessed series of events during the closing days of 2005.... first and foremost is the unusual echelon of race riots in Sydney despite the nation's best efforts to manage race relations. Australia and New Zealand are increasingly looking towards Asia and the recently concluded ten-member ASEAN summit in Kula Lumpur complimented when it declared a vision for an EU style enlargement in Asia encompassing Japan, South Korea, China, India, Australia and New Zealand. Undoubtedly such a formation, if realised, will become a powerful economic force surpassing US and EU.

In Melbourne, Eelam Tamil Sangam celebrated the annual Muthamil Vizha, which was an impressive display of young talents and local artiste. Christmas is a significant celebration across the globe and it's magnitude intensifies several fold to Australian Tamils as it is on that day that Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (in Australia) together with Eelam Tamil Sangam in Melbourne and Inbathamil Oli 24hour Tamil radio in Sydney organises gargantuan fundraising campaign on radio in aid of development projects in the North and East Sri Lanka. Australian Tamil Broadcasting Corporation (ATBC), a 24hour Tamil radio also organises a separate fundraising appeal on the same day for the same cause.

Pillayar Kathai as well as Thiruvembavai were observed in most of the temples in major cities in Australia & New Zealand with pertinent religious ceremonies. Aiyappan worship which is quite popular in South India, is fast gaining momentum among Ceylon Tamils in Australia, which is evident from the increasing number of people undertaking the somewhat vigorous fasting during the months of December-January.

Assassination of Joseph Pararajasingam was a particular jolt to many in this region since the slain leader has visited the region on numerous occasions and maintained regular ties with Tamils in Australia and New Zealand. No doubt, the death and incomprehensible destruction in the aftermath of tsunami remained in the hearts and minds of Tamils in this region and it was amply evident during the congregations marking the tsunami remembrance.

Sixth Tamil Writers festival returned to it's home turf in

Melbourne during the first week of January, after the previous two conclaves in Canberra and Sydney respectively. Writers conclave is increasingly becoming a unifying point for Tamils scattered across Australian continent while promoting an array of talents. As mentioned in this column earlier, number of books published in Tamil in Australia are on an upsurge and one of the notable effort in the recent past is the publication of "Nallaikumarar" Kandiah Kumarasamy's translation of George Orwell's Animal Farm titled Villangu Parṇai.

Sivasupramaniam Sitsabesan

A DISPLACED WOMAN'S CRIES...

Rains thundering on the makeshift roof
Of the damp, cold shaky wooden hut
Remind her of the shower of shells
That took her husband's life away.
The untold losses, including her home,
Locked up in the High Security Zone
Have wrought some wounds in her heart
To last a life time if not more.

The children asleep on torn, bare mats
Toss and turn on the rough hard floor.
She hugs her sleep beside her kids.
Her mind's eye opens: she sees her house,
The jasmine bower and courtyard flowers
Turning red with raging fires.
There is her hearth with ashes heaped,
Her happy memories have been burnt alive

Suddenly her loud cry echoes all over,
"My home. Please let me have my home."
"Amma, Amma," her children shout.
Their awakened cries ring loud and clear,
Echoing around the whole world, the universe.
Who will hear their cries? Wipe their tears?
Peace and Human Kindness will hear perhaps,
Sooner, before they become ashes themselves.

- Varatha Shanmuganathan

(continued on from page 35)

Renuka was acted as the main character in a Tamil film "Amma" (Mother) produced by the Liberation Tigers' film division Nitharsanam. The LTTE has accused the Army intelligence operatives and members of Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP) for the killing.

Two civilians, one soldier injured: Jan 16 - A soldier manning a checkpoint in Anpuvullipuram in Trincomalee district was injured when a hand grenade was lobbed around 8.30 p.m on 16 January. In a separate incident, two Tamil civilians, Selvanayagam Mayoora, 35, and Sabaratnam Mathivathanakumar, 32, were injured when unknown gunmen fired at them at 10.30 p.m. Sunday while they were going to their residences in Pallathoddam in Uppuveli Police division. All three injured were admitted to the Trincomalee general hospital, police sources said. Mayoora and Mathivathanakumar are employees at a mechanical workshop in Veeranagar in east port town.

EPDP supporter shot dead: Jan 16 - Navaratnarajah Jegatheeswaran, 26, from Rajakiramam in Karaveddy, Jaffna was shot dead at 8.30 a.m. Sunday (15) by suspected LTTE gunmen riding in a motorbike along Nelliady-Kodikamam road.. Jagatheeswaran is reported to be a supporter of the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP). Jegatheeswaran was a father of four children and earned his living doing manual labor, loading and unloading vehicles.

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