

ATIONAL

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Sabalingam killing bodes ill for Tamils

From V. Jayanth

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The coldblooded murder of Sabalingam in broad daylight in his Tamil home on May Day by suspected LTTE militants has shocked Tamils world over, especially the expatriate community in Europe. Coming at a time when the European Parliament has expressed displeasure over the work of organisations like the LTTE in some European countries, it could well be the last straw on the Tamil back.

The Swiss Government has decided to expatriate about 1,500 Sri Lankan Tamils on a voluntary basis before getting rid of extremists among the asylum seekers. If this move by European countries may follow Germany, the Tamil diaspora settled there for years. And London remains what Sri Lanka and many other countries call the international capital of terrorist movements.

In Canada, where about one lakh Tamils from Sri Lanka, including some militants, have taken refuge, about half a dozen Tamil weeklies and journals are published. The country has also seen frequent clashes because of militant group rivalries.

Sabalingam, 42-year-old veteran of the Tamil struggle, was gunned down by two unknown Tamil youths.

According to Mr. D. B. S. Jayaratne, former editor of a Tamil journal in Canada, the youths had pretended to seek Sabalingam's help in 'writing out a case' — a Tamil phraseology in Europe for a person seeking asylum or refugee

Sabalingam was providing such professional help to even unknown Tamils in France. The youths, pulled out his pistol and shot him before fleeing. Sabalingam's wife, Koran, ran to the street crying for help, but the fleeing youths kept the neighbours at bay.

By killing the LTTE has eliminated a rival and to be writing a history of the Eelam struggle. It is alleged, Sabalingam was one of the founders of the famous 'Manavar Peraval', the front that heralded the arrival of Tamil youth in Jaffna. It was launched to protect the 'standardisation formula' for admission to the universities — one of the first proposals to the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Associated with LTTE chief

Sabalingam at that stage, was associated with the LTTE chief, Mr. V. Prabhakaran and knew the background well. He threw in his lot with the LTTE but left it when the LTTE started eliminating rival leaders. He then took to writing up a small-time publishing firm in Paris. Intelligence sources here are worried that the shooting could usher in an anti-Tamil wave in Europe. The future of thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils who have taken economic refuge there, will be in jeopardy.

Intelligence sources said the LTTE could have eliminated a few of its members in Germany to 'complete the mission', without the Paris establishment know anything about it. The Paris office of the LTTE is reported to have denied involvement in the killing. It has been the policy of Prabhakaran to neutralise the immediate threat without thinking of

the long-term repercussions or consequences, they said.

They said 'The LTTE wants to be the sole representative of the Tamils and cannot digest a truthful presentation of the history of Tamil Eelam. The Tiger leadership will be exposed in any such history. So it must have been their plan to prevent Sabalingam from completing this task.'

Interethnic clashes in London

Sri Lankan intelligence sources were also analysing reports of the interethnic clashes in the LTTE's London establishment. Sources said 400 of the main functionaries in London had an open quarrel and one of them was in the process of being shifted out. 'This will be a body blow to the LTTE and can wean away the support of the expatriate community in any country. The expatriates are contributing significantly to the upkeep of the LTTE, its international network and a communications system. Western countries will now come under pressure to come down on these LTTE offices,' they said.

'Though the Sri Lankan Foreign office has complained about the LTTE functioning blatantly in 'friendly countries' and carrying on propaganda against the Government in Colombo, it has not had any effect on these Western powers. And if the LTTE threatens the local resident population and wages its war on foreign soil, there could be a repetition of the Indian experience. And this is what worried even Tamils not attached to any group, because one member of almost every family in Jaffna, lives abroad and sends in monthly remittances.'

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