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Trinco MPs assassinated

Trincomalee MP and senior leader of the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) Arunasalam Thangathurai, 61, was assassinated on 5 July in the presence of hundreds of school children.

Eye-witnesses say the killers threw a grenade and fired while Mr Thangathurai was leaving a ceremony at Srishanmuga Hindu Girls College in the heart of Trincomalee town. Two school principals and two others also died and 15 injured.

Police say that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) carried out the attack, claiming that three of the nine suspects arrested have confessed. TULF's Trincomalee branch says that governments have failed to properly investigate political murders in the past and has called for a Presidential Commission of Enquiry into the killing. Mr Thangathurai is the eighth TULF leader to be killed since the LTTE assassinated A Amirthalingam and V Yogeswaran in July 1989.

TULF leader M Sivasithamparam declined to blame the LTTE observing that several groups have been armed by the government. But suspicion has fallen on the Tigers. The assassination was on 5 July, *Black Tiger Day*, annually observed since the first suicide attack was carried out by LTTE's Captain Miller during Sri Lankan Army's *Operation Liberation* in July 1987 in the Jaffna peninsula.

Mr Thangathurai had been holding talks with Muslim leaders in the east where the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) led by Rehabilitation minister MHM Ashraff is demanding a separate Muslim territory. SLMC fears Tamil hegemony in a future north-east and wants recognition of the distinct Muslim identity written into the government's current devolution package.

Reports say the TULF had agreed to support the proposal for a separate council for Muslim majority areas of Sammanthurai, Pottuvil and Kalmunai in Amparai District. Under the proposal, the

TULF's agreement with the Amparai proposal may have been looked upon as a traitorous act by the LTTE, who regard the Amparai District as part of the claimed separate state of Tamil Eelam and oppose any Muslim territory.

rest of Amparai will be joined with the Sinhalese-majority Polonnaruwa District thereby completely removing the Amparai District from Tamil control in any future devolution unit. The proposal also envisages one council for Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts with an overwhelming Tamil majority and having an option of joining the northern council through a referendum.

Until now all Tamil parties have demanded the continuing linking of the north and east as one unit for the purpose of devolution. The two provinces were merged under the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement of July 1987. TULF's agreement with the Amparai proposal may have been looked upon as a traitorous act by the LTTE, who regard the Amparai District as part of the claimed separate state of *Tamil Eelam* and oppose any Muslim territory.

Even before the reverberations of the Thangathurai killing died down, another assassination rocked the eastern port city of Trincomalee. Muslim MP and former Shipping Deputy minister MEH Maharoof, 58, was shot dead near Uppuveli, three miles north of Trincomalee town, on 20 July. Five others travelling with him in his car, includ-

ing a child, were also killed. No one has been arrested but the police have again accused the LTTE.

Mr Maharoof was scheduled to visit Irakkandy village where the LTTE abducted 32 Muslims on 2 July. The villagers are accused of handing over two Tiger cadre to the Army. Seven of the abducted were later released to the ICRC and a LTTE statement has called on Muslim leaders to intercede on behalf of the two Tigers with the Army, if the others are to be released.

LTTE's silence over the brutal murders is viewed with consternation. London-based human rights agency Amnesty International has described the killings of MPs on the basis of their activities as a contemptible act. Amnesty has called on the LTTE to stop murder of non-combatants and cease all human rights violations. Observers say LTTE leader V Prabhakaran has declared in a statement that people who betray the liberation struggle and the concept of a Tamil homeland must receive the punishment they deserve.

The murder of the Trincomalee MPs has sent shock waves through the northern Muslim community, currently living in refugee camps in Puttalam, Anuradhapura and Kurunegala districts. Around 100,000 Muslims were driven out of the Northern Province by a LTTE ultimatum in October 1990.

After seven years of suffering in refugee camps, northern Muslims are desperate to return home, particularly in view of tensions with local communities in the three districts. Muslim businessmen are worried over Jaffna Municipal Commissioner's notice announcing his intention to cancel lease agreements of shops in Jaffna town.

The Army wants Jaffna Muslims to return and assures security and rehabilitation facilities will be provided. But the Muslims are concerned over security and reluctant to return without safety guarantees from the LTTE.

Sri Lanka Monitor on the internet: <http://www.gn.apc.org/refugeecounciluk>

THE VANNI

Denying basic needs

AN Army shell hit the Akkarayan hospital staff residence in Kilinochchi District on 15 July killing four members of one family and seriously wounding six others. Two days later four others, including 13 year-old S Vanniasingham, were killed by shells in Mankulam.

By end of July the Army was still outside Puliyankulam, 12 miles from Vavuniya in *Operation Jayasikurui* (Certain Victory) launched on 13 May to capture the 40-mile road between Vavuniya and Kilinochchi, but shelled LTTE areas in the Vanni. Eight Tigers were killed by the Army at Vaddakachchi in Kilinochchi on 5 July. The Defence Ministry says 12 LTTE cadre and two soldiers died in a clash in Nedunkerni two days later.

Troops at Nedunkerni advancing south-west to Puliyankulam met heavy LTTE resistance at Sannasiparanthan on 1 August. An officer and 17 soldiers were killed. The Army says 50 Tigers also died in the clash. On the same day the LTTE launched a third major assault on *Jayasikurui* troops at Omanthai and Rambaikulam. The Tigers say 126 cadre died and claim 135 soldiers were killed. The Army admits to only 70 deaths and says that strengthened defences prevented the LTTE seizing artillery positions.

International agencies estimate that 70,000 people have been displaced by *Operation Jayasikurui* and there are currently 380,000 refugees in LTTE-controlled Vanni areas. NGOs warn that

government's 9 May order to provide dry rations to only 185,000 people, ie. a 55% reduction, will increase the risk of malnutrition. Senior government officer in Mullaitivu, Government Agent (GA) R Tharmakulasingham says that he has been given permission to provide relief only to 6,000 of the 11,000 newly arrived refugees in the district.

Water supply and shelter problems continue to cause concern in the Vanni. Many drinking water wells have dried following prolonged drought and water levels in reservoirs are falling. Humanitarian agencies provide assistance to drill new wells and continue to supply water by bowser to some remote coastal areas.

Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu GAs have appealed for assistance to repair refugee huts and relocate displaced people occupying schools. Sri Lanka Red Cross Coordinator Sivanathan Kishor says refugees in Thunukkai, Yogapuram and Mallavi are receiving only one meal a day. Many are malnourished and have contracted disease. The health situation of Vanni refugees is deteriorating and malaria, diarrhoea and respiratory diseases are on the increase.

Reports say the Army is considering opening a new route for civilians crossing from the Vanni into Vavuniya if LTTE agrees. The new route will be through Tiger-controlled Sasthiri Koolankulam and military-held Marukkarampalai, a mile south.

Language

President Chandrika directed all government departments in early July to recruit more Tamil staff to give effect to constitutional provisions which entitle citizens to transact official business in Sinhala or Tamil language.

Arrested

Sicilian police arrested 350 illegal immigrants, including Sri Lankans on 18 July. Indonesian police took into custody 22 Sri Lankans attempting to go to Australia on 28 July from Kupang in West Timor.

Reform

Over 55 people were injured when police dispersed students demonstrating in Colombo on 30 July against educational reforms. Under new plans students will study three subjects for university entrance instead of the current four and face an aptitude test.

Stranded

Over 2,500 people are stranded in Trincomalee from 3 July following disruption of ship services to Jaffna. North-East Governor Gamini Fonseka ordered payment of Rs 50 a day for each person from 1 August.

Deserters

The Army announced a two-week amnesty for 10,000 deserters beginning on 10 July. Reports say by the end of the month 4,200 had reported for duties. Army deserters are alleged to be involved in murders and robberies in southern areas.

80% houses damaged in Jaffna

IN a petition to the visiting Colombo Anglican Bishop Kenneth Fernando in early July, the Jaffna NGO Consortium says that Jaffna people face enormous difficulties in day-to-day life.

Military operations have damaged 80% of the 176,300 houses in the peninsula. Over 17,000 houses have been completely destroyed. Reports say Rs 478 million (\$9.6 million) approved by President Kumaratunge for repair of buildings has not been paid. In Jaffna a packet of cement is sold at Rs 535 while the price in other districts is only Rs 265. The Northern Province Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority says 80,000 bags of cement and roofing material will be imported from India.

A number of houses and schools are occupied by the Army. People complain that a large number of trees, including coconut and palmyrah trees providing livelihood, are being cut down for military use. The President's June instruction to provide relief in place of government's poverty alleviation *Samurthi* programme has not been carried out.

A UN mission to Jaffna in June recognised the need for settlement assistance. UN agencies are providing Rs 133 million (\$2.6 million) for rehabilitation, education and health projects. A number of governments and international NGOs will promote health and agriculture. Reconstruction is proceeding at a slow pace. According to reports it takes four

months to transport goods by ship to Jaffna. Permits from the Defence Ministry are always delayed and costs of shipping have considerably increased in recent months. Traders say they are forced to pass on the costs to the consumer and prices in Jaffna remain high.

The Jaffna hospital lacks ventilators, oxygen and beds and doctors are finding it difficult to treat patients seriously ill. Reports say the mortality rate in the Premature Baby Unit rose to 46% in June primarily due to equipment shortage. Jaffna University's Dr N Sivarajah says landmines kill or seriously injure at least ten people every month and has called for action to remove landmines before implementing reconstruction programmes.

■ Over 5,000 rounded-up in Trincomalee

Soldiers on rampage

AFTER the LTTE ambushed an Army unit at Puthukudyiruppu, seven miles south of Batticaloa town on 15 July killing three, soldiers ran amok attacking people and setting houses ablaze. Furniture was thrown out and burned on the roads.

Local people say 87 houses and 30 fences were reduced to ashes and another 30 houses damaged. Electricity Board employee K. Sangaramurthy was stabbed and injured with a bayonet. In a letter to President Chandrika, TULF leader M Sivasithamparam says that indiscipline in the Army is widespread and has demanded an enquiry.

After the Tigers wounded two policemen at Mylankarachchai, north of

Batticaloa, security forces shot dead T Subramaniam and destroyed 14 houses. Another twelve houses were burned at Thiyavattavan.

Clashes between the LTTE and the Army occur every day in the east destabilising the entire area. The Tigers attacked the Sinnawathai police station on 12 July killing a policeman and a civilian. In a clash at Sithandy, 6 miles south of Valaichenai, a soldier and 32 Tigers were killed on 21 July.

The Army conducted several search operations in the east. Ten people were arrested in a dawn search of Batticaloa town on 11 July. Over 3,000 people were rounded-up in Kallady on 1 August and interrogated. All were released later.

A gang attacked the Batticaloa office of the Tamil group EROS on 14 July killing P Chandrakumar. Municipal councillor R Prabhakaran, his wife and son were seriously wounded. His son Krishanthan later died in hospital. A policeman and another suspect have been arrested. Batticaloa Mayor Cheliyan Perinpanayagam says he is deeply concerned that the incident took place inside the Army security zone. Security provided to local councillors in Batticaloa was withdrawn in June.

Shelling from Kommathurai Army camp injured S Mathani and bank employee S Murthy in Chenkalady on 5 July. Two others were injured at Kiran two days later. LTTE shells injured students R Suresh and P Niroshan in Batticaloa town on 13 July. N Murugamurthy was killed by a shell while sleeping at his home in Thandiyady in mid-July. Thayathu Mohamed and his son Ismail were killed by shells on 21 July at Navalady.

In Trincomalee District following the assassination of two local MPs, security was tightened. Over 2,500 people were rounded-up in Trincomalee town on 27 July and 12 detained. In another round-up on 31 July in Uvarmalai, 3,000 people were taken to a church and paraded before masked informers. Twenty were held for further enquiries.

Two policemen were killed in a LTTE attack on a security post at Thoppur south-east of Muthur. Seven Muslim civilians were also killed in the attack.

emergency

OPENING the Emergency debate in Parliament on 10 July, Deputy Defence minister Anuruddha Ratwatte announced the withdrawal of Emergency in some areas of the island. Emergency will continue in the North-East and its border areas, Gampaha and Colombo. Some observers believe that the withdrawal is in view of the UN Human Rights Committee sessions in August. Tamil parties have been campaigning for support against Emergency. TULF MPs led by Joseph Pararajasingham walked out of Parliament during the debate. Mr Pararajasingham told US Congress members and UN officers on a visit in late July to Washington, that Emergency regulations and the Prevention of Terrorism Act were catalysts for grave violation of human rights. He pointed out that in the 18,100 days since independence in 1948, Sri Lanka has been under Emergency rule for 8,760 days. Giving reasons for the extension of Emergency in the North-East, Mr Ratwatte referred to the hijacking of a North Korean ship. *Sea Tigers* seized the vessel *Moran Bong* off Alampil in Mullaitivu District on 7 July and shot dead a crew member. The vessel had been hired by the government to transport goods to Jaffna. The LTTE has accused the government of using merchant ships to ferry weapons. Mystery surrounds another ship *Stillus Limmasul* which disappeared on 25 May in the Mozambique Channel between Africa and Madagascar. The vessel was carrying 32,400 mortar bombs for Sri Lanka from Zimbabwe. Sri Lankan press reports say that on 15 July, a fax message purported to be from the LTTE to a Western embassy claimed that the ship had fallen into Tiger hands. Accurate description of the deadly cargo and its source in the fax have led to speculations that the Sri Lankan government may have hired a Tiger ship to transport ammunition for war against the Tigers.

Devolution agreement

MPs of the ruling People's Alliance participating in a seminar in Beruwala on 15 July, adopted a resolution expressing support for the government devolution proposals made public in August 1995. The seminar was organised on the orders of the President, apparently to bring the MPs into line with government policy. PA MP Jayasena Rajakaruna already faces disciplinary action for opposing the devolution package.

In a hard-hitting speech, President Chandrika emphasised that the ethnic crisis could not be solved by war alone and called for unstinted support for devolution. But divisions within the PA surfaced during the seminar. Hardline Deputy Defence minister Anuruddha

Ratwatte demanded support for the war stressing that the Army needed men, arms and motivation. The seminar ended by approving government's "peace through war" strategy. The resolution was unequivocal in its demand for the defeat of the LTTE before implementation of the devolution package.

Government representatives were prohibited from attending a seminar titled *Sri Lanka peace process* in Lauzanne, Switzerland on 28 July, arranged by London-based NGO International Alert. Prominent participants in the seminar included former Sri Lankan Army chief and Defence Secretary Cyril Ranatunge and former Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka JN Dixit.

Mass arrests in Colombo despite assurances

Continuing impunity

POLICE searched 15 lodges in the Colombo suburb of Bambalapitiya at 4am on 14 July and took into custody over 500 Tamil men and women. After interrogation they were paraded before masked informers and 13 were detained. According to lodge owners the Tamils were taken away even after proof of police registration was shown.

Reports say after Justice minister GL Peiris gave assurances to Tamil political parties over Tamil harassment in Colombo in early July, over 50 Tamils, including university students and government officers, were arrested from lodges in Pettah and Wellawatte. A Pettah lodge was closed by the police.

TULF leader M Sivasithamparam says agreements with Mr Peiris - that at police stations a senior police officer will be in charge of arrests, police stations will have Tamil-speaking officers and a detention monitoring committee composed of Tamil representatives will be appointed - have not been implemented.

Police say search operations in Colombo continued in view of *Black Tiger* Day on 5 July and Black July, the anniversary of the anti-Tamil violence in 1983. Tamil MPs accuse the police of exceeding their powers under the law. Eight Tamil organisations say in a late July statement that frequent complaints have been ignored by security forces.

In early July the Supreme Court ordered the release of 54 year-old S Kanmani. She had been arrested at a lodge in Vavuniya on 12 March and detained at Kirillapone police station in Colombo. Theiventira Shobana, 21, was arrested on 18 June at the Colombo airport on the way to Singapore for her wedding. Fundamental rights applications have been filed in the Supreme Court in respect a number of Tamils arrested at the airport in June.

Batticaloa Grama Sevaka (Village Headman) V Linganathan, his wife Angaladevi and assistant A Mangalarani were detained in Colombo on 25 June.

Mr Linganathan accompanied his wife who came to the capital for medical treatment. Mrs Mangalarani was later released but others remain in detention.

In mid-July the Supreme Court also ordered the release of five Tamils arrested in Jaffna in late 1996 and early 1997, including 14 year-old student A Ashok, who had all suffered severe torture in custody. Another detainee Davis Aloysius arrested in Trincomalee on 17 March says he was hung by his legs and beaten with batons. His head was covered with a plastic bag dipped in petrol.

Reports say that in the last 30 months, 860 complaints were made against the police for breach of fundamental rights and the Police Department has paid Rs 6.6 million (\$132,000) as compensation following court orders. In 158 cases against the police, the Attorney General's Department failed to appear in court. Meanwhile Justice minister GL Peiris says human rights violations will be brought to an end in the next two years.

Refugee children die in Mannar

SIX refugee children died of diarrhoea in Mannar District in July and over 160 other people have contracted the disease. International agencies say the condition of 7,500 people in the newly established Mullikulam refugee camp, 12 miles north-east of Madhu, is serious as the camp lacks sanitary and other facilities.

According to Mannar Government Agent SM Croos, over 20,000 refugees have entered the district from the Vanni since Army's *Operation Jayasikurui* began in May and 30 families arrive every day. Around 3,500 people registered to go to Jaffna are stranded in Mannar. Ship services were suspended after the LTTE hijacked and damaged refugee ship *Misen* on 1 July.

Another 3,000 refugees in schools at Karukaikulam near LTTE's Adampan checkpoint are suffering without adequate relief. UNHCR's new representative Bo Schack says talks with the LTTE over transport of refugees to Jaffna have produce any results.

Refugees continue to arrive from the northern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. There are currently 70,000

refugees in Tamil Nadu camps, including 8,000 who arrived since 8 August. Reports say another 5,000 may have entered illegally within the past one year.

India and Sri Lanka crossed swords

THE SRI LANKA MONITOR is part of an information processing service set up by the British Refugee Council to keep Sri Lankan refugees in Britain, Europe and elsewhere, informed about the current situation in their home areas.

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again over fishermen in the Palk Strait dividing the two countries. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi demanded Indian intervention after the Sri Lankan Navy shot dead four Indian fishermen in mid-July. As Tamil intellectuals staged a protest fast in Chennai, former Indian Railways minister George Fernandes alleged that the Sri Lankan Navy has killed 253 fishermen in Indian territorial waters and threatened to take the issue to the United Nations.

As the Indian High Commissioner Nareshwar Dayal complained to Sri Lankan Foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, Indian Prime Minister IK Gujral assured Mr Karunanidhi that appropriate action will be taken to protect Indian fishermen. In the last few months Mr Karunanidhi has been threatening to withdraw his DMK party from India's ruling coalition over other issues.

Mr Kadirgamar has denied that the Sri Lankan Navy was responsible for the killings. Sri Lanka says *Sea Tiger* boats often hide among fishing vessels launching attacks on the Sri Lankan Navy and smuggling food and fuel to the island.