

## Election Boycott:

### Reflection of prevailing Tamil opinion towards Sri Lankan leaders

- LTTE's Political Head, Mr. S. P. Thamichelvan-

**D**enying accusation they had intimidated Tamils into not voting in last week's Sri Lanka Presidential election, the Liberation Tigers said the boycott by the Tamil people last week was a reflection of prevailing Tamil opinion towards Sri Lankan leaders, based on their bitter experiences of the past. The near total boycott by Tamil voters took place despite the "oppressive presence of thousands of Sri Lankan troops and Army-backed paramilitaries in Jaffna and other parts of the Northeast," the LTTE's Political Head, Mr. S. P. Thamichelvan, told TamilNet Tuesday. He reiterated that the LTTE had not ordered Tamils to boycott the elections.

"The reality was that the Tamil people, faced with intimidation by the all pervasive presence of Sri Lankan troops, Army-backed paramilitary cadres and intelligence operatives delivered a message against the oppressive presence of the military," he said.

He questioned how the allegation of intimidation could be levelled against the LTTE when the voters in question were living under the "so-called protective" guns of the occupying Sri Lankan forces."

He also pointed out that LTTE members had long ago been withdrawn from SLA held areas in the wake of Sri Lankan military intelligence supported paramilitary attacks on them.

"There are forty thousand Sri Lankan troops in Jaffna alone posing a clear intimidatory presence, providing the so-called protection" Mr. Thamichelvan said. "Nevertheless, there was a record low in polling in Jaffna."

"Those who allege that the Tamil people were intimidated not only fail to understand the ground reality prevailing in the Tamil homeland in both political and historical context, but also fail to interpret the message the people have given," he said.

"The tsunami victims and the war displaced people, made to live in temporary shelters, have been badly hit again by the present floods. This aggravation is the ground reality despite four years of the peace," said Thamichelvan monitoring relief work among flood victims in a flood damaged area in the Vanni.

"Our initial stand, as representatives of the Tamil people, on Colombo's elections, was a reflection of the overall view prevailing among the Tamil people," he said.

"All access was promised to election monitors. From our point, the roads were open," the LTTE's Political Head said.

He added that election monitors were still welcome for a meeting to take up the complaints against the LTTE "issue by issue" and "to examine the circumstances concerned in detail." (source:TamilNet, November 22, 2005)

#### BBC- Pre-Election Assessment:

### Tamils give election the thumbs down

Millions of Sri Lankans will vote in Thursday's crucial presidential vote. But the country's minority Tamils say they are not interested in the election process and may not cast their votes. And that could have a significant impact on the results.

Opposition candidate Ranil Wickramasinghe and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse, both from the majority Sinhalese community, have made last-minute efforts to garner support. But there is little sign that they have won over the hearts of Tamils in the war-ravaged northern and eastern part of this island.

(BBC16 nov.2005 08.03GMT)

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## S.Lanka asks Norway to stay on as peace broker

(Source: Reuters COLOMBO, Dec 7)

Sri Lanka has invited mediator Norway to continue its role in the island's troubled peace process with Tamil Tiger rebels, the government said on Wednesday, despite some expectations they would be kicked out.

New President Mahinda Rajapakse's hardline Marxist and Buddhist allies have been pushing for the removal of Norway -- seen by some in Sri Lanka as too sympathetic to the Tigers -- and aides had said he was keen to bring India on board.

"President Rajapakse invited the Royal Norwegian Government to continue its role as facilitator to the peace process in Sri Lanka," the government information department said in a statement. Oslo had already offered to stay on.

## Tigers demand urgent talks to defuse Sri Lanka war fears

(Source: AFP Sat Dec 10)

Tamil Tiger rebels have asked Norway to arrange urgent peace talks with Colombo to prevent Sri Lanka from sliding back into war after 31 people died in a week of violence.

A report on the website of the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) says they have told Norway's top envoy here, Hans Brattskar, immediate negotiations should begin to maintain a tenuous truce in place since February 2002.

"Our commitment to the ceasefire and the peace process remains undiluted and what we request now is to urgently arrange a high-level meeting between the parties...", said the LTTE's political wing leader S. P. Thamilselvan.

## Colombo blocks Akashi from visiting Kilinochchi

(source: TamilNet, December 11, 2005)

The Sri Lankan government has prevented Japanese Special Peace Envoy, Yasushi Akashi, from visiting Kilinochchi to meet the political wing leaders of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to discuss matters related to peace process. Denying media reports in Colombo that Japan wanted to become partner of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), Akashi said Japan has no intention of becoming a partner to the SLMM and applauded the Scandinavian countries for their effective work.

## Norway says it will remain Sri Lankan peacemaker but on its own terms

(Source: AFP Dec 15)

Norway's foreign minister told his Sri Lankan counterpart Thursday that Oslo would continue trying to broker peace in the island's long-running ethnic conflict, but only under strict conditions.

"I have reiterated that this is a commitment of the Norwegian government because I think they wanted to hear that the new Norwegian government stands behind this," he told AFP after the meeting.

"I have also underlined...the framework and the ground rules that have to apply if we are going to be able to play this kind of role."

Norway's role as peacemaker had been in doubt after President Mahinda Rajapakse campaigned on a pledge to overhaul the Oslo-backed initiative begun by his predecessor, but then asked Norway to stay on after his election victory on November 17.

Then-Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg said on a visit to India earlier this month that Oslo would get involved again only if both Colombo and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) showed "real will" to talk peace.

Store said the peace process between the government and Tamil separatist rebels had been on hold in recent months as both countries held elections that ushered in new administrations.

"The meeting was a way for the new Norwegian government and the new government of Sri Lanka to meet politically and discuss a new starting point for how we engage," he said.

Store said he had told Samaraweera there were a series of conditions Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers must meet for Norway to continue its mediation. He did not spell them out to AFP but added: "For us, it is key that the process is owned by the parties, so they own the upside and the downside.

"We are facilitators to help toward the upside but we can only do as much as third parties themselves want," he said.

"Norway comes to these kind of situations with a toolbox that does not carry economic, political or any other dimension," he said.

"That is the strength of our approach because we not have a vested interest in the situation itself and we can be a constructive and committed third party."

## Sri Lanka irked over Norway comments on peace bid

*(Source: AFP 15.12.05)*

Sri Lanka has expressed concern over Norway's remarks that it would only resume the role of peace broker in a three-decade ethnic conflict if both sides agree to a set of conditions, a press report said.

Colombo expressed "concern" over the remarks made last week by Norwegian International Development Minister Erik Solheim, the Sri Lankan Sunday Times said, adding that it would raise the issue with Norway's ambassador.

"The ministry has also been told to express the government's displeasure over why Mr. Solheim had gone public in the international media over this matter when it should have been raised with the government," the newspaper said.

"Our initial reaction is that it's positive that we've been asked to continue our work. This is a vote of confidence," Solheim said in Oslo.

"But we want to make sure we agree with the government as well as with the LTTE on the conditions before we accept to take on that role again," he told AFP in Oslo.

"We are prepared to continue negotiations but there has to be real will on both sides," he said. "We will sit with both parties to see how to continue... We can play a role and proceed when there is willingness of both sides."

## Oslo peace envoy fears Sri Lanka violence

*(Source Reuters 18 Nov 2005)*

A Norwegian peace envoy expressed fears of widening violence in Sri Lanka after hawkish Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse won the island's presidency on Friday.

"The situation is now very difficult," Development Minister Erik Solheim, who has led stalled Norwegian efforts to aid peace talks between Colombo and separatist Tamil Tiger rebels, told NRK public radio of the election result.

"There may be a danger that Sri Lanka can slide further into uncontrolled violence in considerable parts of the country," he said.

"The situation now is very, very difficult when a large majority of Tamils stayed away from the election," Solheim said.

## Hawk named as Sri Lanka premier

*(source:BBC 22.11.05)*

Sri Lanka's newly-elected president, Mahinda Rajapakse, has appointed a hardliner as his prime minister. Ratnasiri Wickremanayake took his oath of office on Monday, a government spokesman said.

The country's stock market fell sharply on news of the appointment, which is seen as reinforcing the hawkish stance of the president towards Tamil rebels. Like Mr Rajapakse, Mr Wickremanayake is a Sinhala nationalist. The former was premier until winning the presidency.

Mr Wickremanayake, 73, briefly served as prime minister under former president Chandrika Kumaratunga between 2000 and 2001. He has previously advocated a military solution to the conflict with the Tamil Tigers, who have fought a 30-year campaign for a separate homeland for minority Tamils in the island's north and east.

## Rajapakse for separating roles of facilitator and monitor

*(source:The Hindu 11.12.05)*

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan President, Mahinda Rajapakse on Friday said that the facilitator for the peace process and the monitor for the ceasefire agreement "cannot be from the same country."

The President's view on separating the twin roles currently played by Norway was reported in the state-run Daily News.

"There should be two entities to facilitate the peace process and to monitor the ceasefire," between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the newspaper quoted Mr. Rajapakse as telling the visiting Japanese Special Envoy, Yasushi Akashi.

## SL Supreme Court suspends P-TOMS inquiry

(source:TamilNet, November 21, 2005)

Sri Lanka's Supreme Court Monday suspended the inquiry into the Post Tsunami Operations Management Structure (P-TOMS) petition. Chief Justice Sarath N.Silva announced that the inquiry into the petitions filed against the implementation of the P-TOMS is suspended indefinitely. The Chief Justice further extended the interim injunction on the implementation of the P-TOMS indefinitely, legal sources said.

## CFA UNDER THREAT

### STF, SL Ministers complicit in paramilitary operations, Karuna in India"

(source:TamilNet, December 12, 2005 )

The two paramilitary cadres who surrendered to the Tigers in Amparai disclosed that Karuna operates from India and that Pillayan was leading the Karuna group operating in the east. They also revealed that Sri Lankan Government Ministers A L M Athaullah, Douglas Devananda and Maithripala Sirisena are complicit in helping paramilitaries operating in the east, during a press conference held at Thenakam guest house in LTTE controlled Karadiyanaru Monday. The cadres also said that the paramilitaries were involved in violence against Muslims to create dissension between Tamil and Muslim communities.

The cadres said that the group was led by Pillayan. Iniyabarathy was functioning as the head of their team in Amparai. They were told by Pillayan, Mangalan master, Iniyabarathy and other operatives that Karuna was operating from India.

"The group of fourty men is headed by Pillayan, and Karuna is in constant communication with Pillayan and other key persons. Karuna talked to me recently before we reneged from the group," Gnanatheepan, who claimed he was second in command next to Iniyabarathy, told the media.

The cadres said Sri Lankan Army Intelligence commanders, Capt. Sureshkumara and Capt. Abeyaratne were the ones who dealt with Pillayan and Iniyabarathy directly.

"Transport arrangements, arms and ammunition supplies are arranged by the Sri Lanka Army Intelligence," Gnanatheepan said. However, the funding was being provided by an external source through a key operative Uruthira, he said.

They were receiving 30 000 rupees as salary, the cadres said adding that the lower ranks were paid at least 10 000 per month.

Karuna Group cadres were mainly based in two places, Thivuchenai and Thirukonamadu, according to Puhalventhan and Gnanatheepan.

Gnanatheepan further said 22 paramilitary cadres, including Puhalventhan and himself, were recently moved to a safehouse in Manthoddam, an SLA controlled area in Amparai, for instigating violence between Tamil and Muslim communities.

Sinhala villagers had protested to their presence in the village. A buddhist monk and a Sri Lankan Military official convinced the villagers and arranged another safe house in the area, he added.

Athaulla's close associate, Fowzer, was in regular communication with Iniyabarathy, the cadres claimed. Fowzer was also helping the group to secure a safe house at Pachchilaipalli in Akkaraipattu and to establish direct links between Athaulla and Iniyabarathy, cadres further said.

"Creating dissension between the Muslims and the Tigers was key to succesful survival of the Karuna Group," Iniyabarathy had repeatedly told his cadres, Gnanatheepan said.

Iniyabarathy communicated with Douglas Devananda every morning, he said adding that Devananda had gifted a computer to Iniyabarathy.

The surrendered cadres also said that journalist Nadesan was shot and killed by Iniyabarathy.

A direct meeting took place between Sri Lanka Minister Maitripala Sirisena and Mangalan master at Thivuchenai in Welikanda, prior to the recent presidential elections, Gnanatheepan said.

Sirisena, according to Gnanatheepan, sought help from the paramilitary to campaign for Mahinda Rajapakse in Polannaruwa and the SLA controlled areas in Batticaloa.

Both the cadres were close friends and following a period when they were disturbed by their own conduct, they resolved to deal with their situation and waited for a suitable opportunity to escape from the SLA controlled area, they said.

"We wanted to leave, and resolved to do it in a meaningful way," Puhalventhan added.

"The opportunity arose when we were taken on a mission in the no man zone area," he added confirming that they shot and killed Iniyabarathy and three other operatives last Monday.

The cadres who carefully avoided mentioning specific operations they were directly involved, told

the media that they were brought to Palpody Military base in Batticaloa in Buffel RPC vehicles 3 days prior to an ambush on Tigers in Vauvunathivu on October 11 and were taken close to the border area by the Sri Lanka military.

The cadres said their real names are Thurasingham Chandrakumar, 21, alias Puhalventhan (from Kaluwankerni), and Samithamby Arunkumar, 26, alias Gnanatheepan (from Vantharumoolai).

Chandrakumar's two sisters were shot and killed in revenge last Wednesday by paramilitary cadres.

The Tigers on Saturday conferred "Tamil National Patriot" titles to the two sisters, Mrs. Yogarasa Yogeswary, 26, and Thurairasa Vathany, 17, who were buried Saturday.

Athaulla is Minister of Fisheries and Housing Development, Douglas Devananda is Minister of Social Services and Social Welfare and the leader of the paramilitary and political party EPDP, and Maithripala Sirisena is Minister of Agriculture, Environment, Irrigation and Mahaweli Development in the cabinet of Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse.

## Colombo to build Naval base in Batticaloa

*(source: TamilNet, December 09, 2005)*

Preparations by the Sri Lanka Government to set-up the first naval base in Batticaloa district close to Eravur was revealed in a meeting between the Police officers of the Batticaloa district, a Muslim Minister and Muslim representatives in Eravur. The special meeting which took place at Eravur Ummah Mosque Friday noon also discussed special security arrangements for Muslims in Eravur. Punnaikudah beach 4 km northeast of Saddam Hussain Village was identified as the location for the first Sri Lankan naval base in Batticaloa district, Muslim attendees to the meeting told TamilNet.

The announcement of the plan to set up a naval base together with the protective security measures to Muslims in the area, was timed to preempt protests from Muslim villages, sources added.

## CFA has to be revived says Lankan Chief of Defence

*(source: TamilNet, December 09, 2005)*

Sri Lanka Chief of Defence Staff, Daya Sandagiri, during a press meet in Colombo Friday ruled out Sri Lanka armed forces going to war but said that they will be prepared to meet any military situation that may arise. He said that the military leadership has submitted a report to SL President Mahinda Rajapakse concluding that the Cease Fire Agreement has to be revived and that Mr Rajapakse will make the final decision on this matter.

## India funds Palaly airstrip reconstruction: Air Force Chief

*(source: UNI/December 09, 2005)*

Sri Lanka's Air Force Commander, Air Vice Marshal, Donald Perera today said the massive reconstruction and repair work of the strategically important Palaly airport runway in the Jaffna peninsula was being carried out with the financial assistance of the Government of India.

"The reconstruction work is in progress with the financial assistance of the Indian government. It was initially planned to complete the work within six to eight months. Unfortunately, the weather is blocking us a little, but it is satisfactorily progressing. A team from India is expected shortly to sit with us and work together," the Air Force Chief told reporters here today.

Refusing to spell out the exact amount of money that the Government of India is putting in for resurfacing the Palaly runway, the Air Force chief said it depended on the scope of work.

Asked as to what the Government of India is gaining out of this multi-million rupee project, he said "It is not the question that I could answer or an issue that the Sri Lankan Air force is worried about. It is an issue for the Governments of India and Sri Lanka to discuss and decide."

## Lankan President bars military from talking to LTTE

*(source HindustanTimes December 13, 2005)*

The Sri Lankan President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, has barred members of the armed forces from engaging in any talks or negotiations with the LTTE and said that matters relating to the Ceasefire Agreement and the peace process were best left to the government and the politicians.

This was stated by Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake at a public meeting in Horana near Colombo, according to Daily Mirror.

"The duty of the armed forces will be to concentrate on security matters while matters regarding the peace process will be handled by the government and the politicians," Wickremanayake said.

This puts an end to the regular ground-level talks between the LTTE and local level commanders of the Sri Lankan armed forces, which have helped defuse tensions in the troubled North Eastern Province many times since the CFA was signed in February 2002.

The last meeting between the Jaffna Security Forces Commander and the Jaffna district LTTE political leader was cancelled because the former did not turn up.

When asked about this, Sri Lanka's Army Commander Lt Gen Sarath Fonseka told the media that there was no ground for any discussion between the two.

## LTTE slams Mosque attack, urges calm

*(Source: TamilNet, November 18, 2005)*

A communiqué issued by the LTTE Political Division, Amparai District, Friday, has condemned the attack on innocent Muslim civilians congregated for prayers at the Grand Mosque, Akkaraippattu, during early hours, Friday. The communiqué said that "the LTTE expressed its deepest sympathies to the families and friends of the victims of the atrocious grenade attack." The LTTE message has pointed out that the grenade attack was aimed at disrupting peace and understanding between Tamils and Muslims and creating "division and animosity" among them. Appealing for calm and patience, the LTTE has vowed to help expose soon, the "surrogate paramilitary elements of the crime".

## Two Tamil activist shot dead, one wounded in Neerveli, Jaffna

*(source:TamilNet, December 01, 2005)*

Unidentified assailants shot and killed two farmers at a tea shop close to Athiyar Hindu College in Neerveli at 8 p.m. Thursday. A youth who was standing inside the tea shop was seriously wounded and was rushed to Jaffna Hospital, civilian sources said. Tension prevails in the area. The Tamil National Vigilance Association has called for a hartal in Jaffna on Friday to protest against the killings.

The victims, Mr. Kunaratnam Krishnakumar, 34 and Mr. Sinnaiah Sivakaran, 24, had parked their Land Master tractor in front of the tea shop. Mr. K. Rooban, 24, the youth wounded in the incident had gone inside the tea shop.

**Villagers living close to the shop alleged that the killings were carried out by intelligence operatives working with the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) and said they heard the sound of speeding three-wheeler after the gun shots were heard.**

The farmers killed on Thursday were also involved in decorating the streets in Neerveli during the Martyrs remembrance week, residents added.

## Revenge killing by suspected paramilitaries

*(source: TamilNet, December 08, 2005)*

Two sisters of Puhalventhan, Mrs. Yogarasa Yogeswary, 26, and Thurairasa Vathany, 17, were shot dead, Wednesday night, by suspected paramilitaries, at Palacholai in Batticaloa. Puhalventhan, a renegade paramilitary cadre from Karuna Group, had surrendered along with Gnanatheepan, his colleague, to the LTTE in Amparai, Tuesday. The sisters were shot as they emerged from their door to greet two callers who had entered the compound around 9:30 p.m. Wednesday. A two years old child was seriously wounded.

*For News updates and Tamil perspectives:*

[www.Tamilnet.com](http://www.Tamilnet.com)

[www.Tamilnation.org](http://www.Tamilnation.org)

[www.Tamilcanadian.org](http://www.Tamilcanadian.org)

[www.Tamilguardian.org](http://www.Tamilguardian.org)

## MISCELLANEOUS

### Military strength, vigilance key to our freedom

#### - LTTE Intelligence Chief Pottu Amman -

*(Source:TamilNet, November 25, 2005 )*

"The Tamil people, having dissociated themselves from the political choice of Sri Lankan nationalism, have unequivocally demonstrated their trust in their own leadership. They have categorically told the Sinhala people to take care of their own nationalism. Even this development is a manifestation of the might of the Tamil people," said LTTE senior commander and Intelligence Chief Pottu Amman, in a homage ceremony held at Elephant Pass (EPS), Thursday.

The LTTE Intelligence Chief addressed a mausoleum gallery in Elephant Pass where, more than 3500 photographs of LTTE fighters who died in various battles, were venerated in an exhibition.

"The Tamil nation gained unprecedented strength through our military feats in the series of battles in Vanni against Sri Lankan armed forces who were intent on annihilating us. This success was made possible because our leaders never lost confidence and cadres believed in our ability to confront the enemy even after the occupation of Jaffna by the Sri Lankan Forces and the attempted rout by the Indian army.

"The battle of Elephant Pass was a pointer to the military might of the Tamils," observed Pottu Amman.

"The sacrifice of the lives of 600 martyrs during the first battle for Elephant Pass in 1991 should be gratefully remembered today, when we are speaking from this redeemed soil. The sacrifices of the 17,000 martyrs will be worth only when we are victorious in achieving unfettered sovereignty," the senior LTTE commander said.

"Let us remember that we are a nation forsaken by the international community in our struggle for freedom. It is in such situation that the fortitude of our fighters and their sacrifice gather momentous magnitude. When Tamils mature into a formidable military, political and economic force, the value of the lives sacrificed by our martyrs will attain fruition," Pottu Amman told thousands of people gathered at the ceremony.

"The historical burden of responsibility placed on us dictates that we become powerful. We need to be vigilant not to fall victim to the snares set by either the Sri Lankan government or its surrogates. It is in our vigilance that our freedom survives. And it is from the might of our strength that our heroic history should be chiselled," he said.

"If we fail, our enemies will be the scribes of our history in which the lives of our martyrs will be tarnished and ridiculed. It becomes incumbent on us to give our martyrs, the glory they deserve," added Pottu Amman.

Five years ago, on April 22nd, the Liberation Tigers hoisted their flag in the heart of what was once one of the most fortified military garrisons in South Asia.

### India sees "internal processes" producing solution

*(Source:TamilNet, December 01, 2005)*

Commenting on Sri Lanka's conflict and peace process, India said Thursday it "believes that an enduring solution can only emerge essentially through internal political processes." In a joint statement issued by both countries on the occasion of Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera's visit to Delhi, the Indian government said it "continues to maintain an abiding interest in the security of Sri Lanka and remains committed to its sovereignty and territorial integrity."

### Colombo cancels Muhamalai meet

*(source:TamilNet, December 05, 2005)*

Sri Lanka Army (SLA) officials informed the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) representatives who were present at Muhamalai Monday evening that the Sri Lanka's Peace Secretariat in Colombo had declined permission to the SLA Jaffna Commander, Maj. Gen. Sunil Tennakoon, to attend the proposed meeting with the LTTE, sources at the LTTE Peace Secretariat in Kilinochchi told TamilNet.

## Sri Lanka's defeated candidate questions new president's peace policy

(Source: Xinhua 19.11.05)

Sri Lanka's main opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe said Friday that the peace policy of the president-elect Mahinda Rajapakse was not clear despite his win in Thursday's presidential election.

Addressing press after he was narrowly pipped at the post by Rajapakse, Wickremesinghe said that the president-elect had the support of 27 parties with different views on his peace initiatives with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

"The road ahead is not clear," said Wickremesinghe, hinting that the Norwegian-backed peace effort may not see its revival in the near future.

## Sri Lankan shares fall after Wickremanayake named as premier

(source: AFX11.21.2005)

Share prices fell sharply in the first two hours of trading as newly elected Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapakse appointed Ratnasiri Wickremanayake as the new ceremonial prime minister, dealers said.

The benchmark All Share Price index plunged 115 points, or 5.0 pct, to 2,213, after crashing 7.0 pct on Friday when Rajapakse defeated pro-market candidate Ranil Wickremesinghe in presidential elections.

## India cannot be a card in Colombo's oppressive politics game - Vaiko

TamilNet, December 13, 2005

Indian Defence Minister Mr Pranab Mukherjee assured the Tamil Nadu Politician Mr. Vaiko Monday that he will investigate the press reports on the reconstruction efforts of Palaly airstrip in the main Sri Lankan military base in Jaffna. "Earlier Indian political leaders had acted with great care, and had declined to enter into a defence treaty or airbase reconstruction projects when I have brought the Tamil concerns to the Indian leadership's notice," Vaiko said.

## Systematic intimidation in East by UPFA politicians

(Source: Daily Mirror - November 14, 2000)

Amidst fears and rumours of election violence in the east, reports surfaced last night of UPFA politicians' allegedly intimidating people in Akkaraipattu and Pottuvil, demanding they boycott the poll.

Foreign election observers operating in the area said these tactics were a form of "systematic intimidation" carried out by government ministers using state vehicles and persons attired in uniforms similar to those worn by STF personnel.

An observer, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the Daily Mirror that these uniformed persons, the police and private supporters were going door to door warning people to stay at home on Election Day.

"It is obvious that Akkaraipattu and Pottuvil are areas heavily in favour of the UNP candidate. So this is an attempt by government politicians in the area to try and make sure the people refrain from casting their ballot, thereby ensuring the national margin is not affected", the polls observer explained.

He said if the election was free and fair, 80% of the population would vote for the opposition candidate on November 17.

"Several people had also been injured in the intimidation", the election observer added.

According to the monitors, tension was running high in Akkaraipattu and Pottuvil after several incidents were reported from the area, with supporters of Minister A.L.M. Athallah allegedly preventing people from attending yesterday's final rally organised by the SLMC in support of UNP candidate Ranil Wickremesinghe.

"A government vehicle bearing number plate 65-0612 is being used to transport people carrying out this campaign of violence and intimidation and we have already recorded the statements of two or three people who have been injured in the process", the observer noted.

Independent election monitors have also voiced fears of threats and intimidation to themselves from the same politicians as they report on violence in the area.

"The use of state vehicles, with visible number plates is good indication that this is clearly government sponsored intimidation", the election observer said.

The number of election monitors in the Eastern Province has been increased due to fears of violence

and malpractice given the number of political players and actors operating in the area. There were also reports that LTTE renegade commander Karuna's cadres had begun distributing leaflets in the east, urging people to vote for Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse on November 17.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### FMM concerned over search on Jaffna press

*source: TamilNet, December 16, 2005*

Expressing concern over the search carried out by the Sri Lanka military at the editorial, administrative and press sections of the Tamil daily Namathu Eelanaadu in Jaffna Thursday, the Free Media Movement (FMM), in a press release issued Thursday, urged "both sides of the conflict to respect the right to freedom of expression and information and not to target media under any situation that may arise out of developing military confrontations."

### SLA soldiers search Jaffna press, threaten workers

*source: TamilNet, December 15, 2005*

Sri Lanka Army cordoned off the offices of the popular Tamil daily Namathu Eelanaadu located in Navalar road Jaffna Thursday 6.30 a.m. and searched the editorial, administrative and press sections of the paper's offices thoroughly for nearly half an hour, workers at the premises said. SLA soldiers questioned several workers at the daily and demanded to see workers' national identity cards. Civil groups expressed alarm at this ominous development to suppress press freedom in Jaffna district.

### Jaffna tense as SLA cordon, searches continue

*source: TamilNet, December 14, 2005*

Tension prevailed in Jaffna as Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers cordoned off and searched several villages in Jaffna district including Kachchai area in Thenmaradchy, Ariyalai in Jaffna, Myilankadu in Valikamam North, Erlalai North and Mandan in Vadamaradchy area, Wednesday morning as the troops continued their security operations for a second day, sources in Jaffna said. Early reports said seven youths have been detained for further questioning by the SLA in Mandan area. However, the SLA has not officially released any information on the detention.

Meanwhile, two families resettled in Ariyalai after living in Vanni have registered complaints with the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) of SLA harassment.

## OPINION

### Security: Counter-insurgency plans terrorise east, unleash selective killing in Colombo

*Source: Northeastern Monthly - December 2005*

In an early comment on his plan of action to resolve the ethnic conflict, newly elected president Mahinda Rajapakse reiterated that he wished to revise the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) so that it would not permit acts of terrorism. 'Terrorism' in his lexicon no doubt denotes LTTE-initiated acts of violence.

Whatever Rajapakse, widely regarded as a 'hawk,' might say in defence of the security forces, the terror unleashed by the army in the name of Karuna both in the east as well as in other parts of Sri Lanka, has created unprecedented levels of tension and fear among the Tamils. Terror tactics have also resulted in the LTTE having to respond in kind.

Behind the tit-for-tat killings by the military and the Tigers is the contest for supremacy between the intelligence apparatuses of the two protagonists to the conflict. As enunciated by several members of the Tiger leadership in the past one-and-a-half years, the security forces are using the ceasefire to get as many 'enemies' as they can – both real and perceived.

Though the intelligence network of the Sri Lankan state is under different agencies, in overall control is the National Security Council, comprising the commanders of the armed forces and police,

the secretary, Ministry of Defence and the president in his capacity of commander-in-chief of the security forces, among others. The day to day running of the various agencies coming under the intelligence umbrella is managed by the NIB, the Directorate of Military Intelligence and the offices in charge of internal and external intelligence.

Covert operations by state counterinsurgency networks usually target three segments of any population:

- (1) Agents actively involved in conducting espionage for the rebels;
- (2) those associated with the agents – family, friends and contacts;
- (3) ordinary people about whom security forces are suspicious.

The abduction, disappearance, torture and killing of intelligence agents also create a massive fear psychosis in the target population. While in open warfare the enemy can be identified, and mutual elimination is the order of the day, the covert nature of the contest in times of so-called peace creates uncertainty and thereby heightens tension in the civilian population.

The east is a case in point. If the Karuna episode had not occurred, the civilian population and its political leadership would have participated much more vigorously in the peace process. After all, the 'peace process' is defined as such assuming there has been a war before, but the protagonists have agreed to step back from violent conflict to look at the contentious issues without resorting to arms – in other words to find political solutions to what triggered the conflict.

However, a covert counterintelligence war prevents that from happening. For instance it is obvious the political process in the east is in pretty bad shape. It is in fact so bad that even the LTTE has moved its political offices in Batticaloa and Amparai to areas coming under its direct control.

The most pervasive effect of counterinsurgency and counterintelligence operations is that it blocks civilian leaderships from emerging. For instance in Batticaloa, fear and suspicion grips the civilian population so intensely that subsequent to the Karuna rebellion there are hardly any leaders that have come up in the ranks of university students, among civil society organisations, or the business community. They do not even have the guts to issue a press statement.

The theory behind using terror to subdue a population is that its incidence is so arbitrary, and so widespread that it defies logic. What is more, the systematic application of terror creates a psychosis among the people to the point that civilians do not bother about politics, or about anything else other than survival.

It has to be understood there is a purpose behind the Sri Lanka military utilising Karuna to create fear among civilians. It is well known that his cadre strength is not imposing, but he is a suitable bogeyman to be used to instil fear in the civilian population and bring it to heel.

While the east has riveted the attention of Sri Lankans due to the orgy of killings and counter-killings, there are number of dark, covert happenings in Colombo of which most of the public is ignorant, and the media silent – except when it wants to sensationalise matters, in which case it blithely attributes the violence to the LTTE, or the 'underworld.' This, more sinister contest, includes abduction, disappearances secret killings etc.

The emergency, now in force, assists this process a great deal. The idea is not to terrorise a population as is happening in the east, but for the security forces to pick out those it believes are close to the LTTE's espionage network so they can be disabled with the least fuss or bother. Some incidents that occurred in the past few months in Colombo are a case in point.

In October, four persons in a van were abducted at Dickman's Road, Bambalapitiya after they were chased from Armour Street, Kotahena. Because one of the persons managed to call on a mobile phone and told his family of his predicament, who in turn informed influential circles, the abducted persons were released. It transpired during inquiries that it was the Special Unit attached to the Dematagoda police, which took in the four. It is important to note that though it was the Special Unit of the Dematagoda Police was involved, since the procedures adopted were contrary to the law, the act can only be described as abduction, and not an arrest.

Good fortune was instrumental in saving the four young men, but there have been a number of disappearances of Tamils in and around Colombo, while corpses have surfaced with gunshot injuries with their hands tied behind their back in classic assassination patterns.

For instance Sathis, from Pungudutheevu, Jaffna was abducted about four months ago. His body was discovered in an abandoned area in Dehiwala with gunshot wounds. He is innocent of connections with the LTTE, but his elder sister is known to have married into a family reputed to have Tiger connections. The bodies of two boys from Batticaloa were also discovered on a subsequent occasion in the same part of Dehiwala.

Two months ago an unidentified body was found near Kochchikade church in Kotahena. Later a Tamil youth was chased by a white van in the same area though he managed to escape from his pursuers successfully.

The military has been training Tamil-speaking personnel to carry out this type of counterintelligence work. For example the notorious Captain Munas is a Tamil-speaking Sinhalese from Negombo whose real name is Pieris Martin. He was 'given' a Muslim name before posted in the east. The deliberate naming of Martin, as 'Munas,' was to give the public the impression he was a Muslim and use it to instigate Muslim-Tamil tensions in the volatile east. In the early 1990s Major Zacky, who was brigade commander was specially trained in intelligence gathering in Batticaloa, under whom Munas served.

Major Muthaliff and Lieutenant Colonel Rizli Meedin, both recently killed in Colombo fall into the same category. They were Tamil-speaking and used by the military for intelligence work. Meedin, for instance, was initially commissioned into 3rd Battalion Sri Lanka Light Infantry (SLLI). In 1989-1990 he was transferred to work in the intelligence unit under the Ministry of Defence. He followed a basic intelligence course in Pakistan and a course in counterinsurgency work in Bangladesh.

Paramilitary units such as the late PLOT Mohan's, the Razik group and cadres of the EPDP, are all active in counterintelligence work such as providing information on a variety of matters such as targets' background, movements contacts etc.

The military has been working hard in training a group of ruthless officers for counterintelligence work and Tamil paramilitary cadres to support them. They are active in the operational areas terrorising and browbeating the Tamil public into submission, while in Colombo they have been involved in selected assassinations in the hope of eliminating what they believe are Tamils working with the LTTE. These initiatives have however have been stoutly resisted by the Tigers leading to the cycles of violence in the east and mysterious dead bodies in Colombo.

## Recognize Tamil need for Self-Government

- Boston Globe editorial December 04, 2005 -

**W**ESTERNERS ARE kept aware of postcolonialist conflicts in Kashmir, Israel-Palestine, Rwanda, and Sudan, but the decades-long conflict on the island nation of Sri Lanka between a Sinhalese Buddhist majority and the Tamil minority often seems a tragedy the West would rather ignore. Recent events there suggest, however, that Sri Lanka desperately needs help from international peace brokers if it is to avoid lapsing back into a bloody internecine war that has been suspended since a 2002 ceasefire.

The outcome of last month's presidential election has stoked fears that the war between the Sinhalese-dominated government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam will resume in coming months. The new president, Mahinda Rajapakse, won a narrow victory in alliance with two hard-line Sinhala nationalist parties thanks to an election boycott by most Tamils in the north of the island.

In Rajapakse's initial address to Parliament Nov. 26, he warned ominously that he will reject self-determination for the Tamils, that he is committed to a "unitary state" controlled by the Sinhala-Buddhist majority, that he wants to dissolve the current joint Tiger-government administration of post-tsunami relief, and that he plans to terminate a peace process that has been mediated by Norway.

Two days later, the Tigers' leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, delivering his annual Heroes' Day speech, restated the Tigers' familiar aim of self-government in a Tamil homeland, noted a "vast" policy difference between the new president and the Tigers and warned that Tamils are losing patience. "The new government should come forward soon with a reasonable political framework that will satisfy the political aspirations of the Tamil people," he said. If no such offer is forthcoming, Prabhakaran said, the Tigers will in the next year "intensify our struggle for self-determination." This either-or threat, seen alongside Rajapakse's own hard-line stance, presages an imminent renewal of civil war.

Former President Bill Clinton, who toured government-controlled areas of Sri Lanka Tuesday as a UN special tsunami envoy, grasped the danger looming over the island should the current ceasefire be washed away. "Any recovery progress achieved this year will be quickly reversed if Sri Lanka returns to civil conflict," Clinton warned.

Sri Lanka has limited strategic importance for the United States, but America's new strategic partner, India, has much to fear from a recurrence of warfare between the Tigers and the island's Sinhala-dominated government. India and the United States should bring international pressure to bear on the island's belligerents to sustain the current ceasefire and craft a political resolution that recognizes the Tamil need for self-government.

## War By Other Means

- Tamil Guardian dec.01 -

**T**he violence which exploded across the Northeast –particularly in Jaffna – in the past week has understandably sent shockwaves throughout Sri Lanka and alarmed international actors with a

stake in securing peace in the island. The frustration of the international ceasefire monitors is palpable, particularly given that just a week ago it appeared the smouldering yet relentless violence of the shadow war seemed to have eased, if not ceased. The lull ushered in by the Presidential election of November 17 was shattered last Thursday when gunmen murdered two pro-LTTE Tamil activists and wounded a third in Army controlled Jaffna. Subsequently, there has been an eruption of violence against the security forces in the northern peninsula – amid clashes between Army-backed paramilitaries and the Tigers in Batticaloa and simmering communal tensions in Trincomalee. But it is the situation in Jaffna that is being nervously watched most closely.

In the past week a rash of attacks on Sri Lankan troops across the government-controlled parts of the peninsula, including two lethal claymore attacks, have left at least fifteen soldiers dead. The question that has understandably risen amongst many is whether this presages a wider resumption of Sri Lanka's conflict. The government says the LTTE is attempting to goad the armed forces into resuming the war. But this charge is untenable – recent events are too naked to be a provocation. The dynamic is quite different – and depressingly familiar: the violence in Jaffna, like that which has gripped the eastern province for over a year is unmistakably part of the shadow war between the military intelligence and the LTTE. But the clashes, as many, including this newspaper, have repeatedly warned, are escalating in scope and reach. Individual incidents are now serious enough in themselves to question the viability of the truce.

But ceasefire breaches that result in high loss of life are not new. Earlier on this year, Army-backed paramilitaries brazenly massacred an LTTE political delegation traveling through government held territory, killing the head of the movement's political wing in Batticaloa, several of his aides and a Tamil parliamentarian traveling with him. In 2003, the Sri Lankan government twice attacked and sank LTTE ships in international waters, killing a dozen cadres each time. Nevertheless Norwegian-brokered talks went ahead a week after the first sinking and dialogue (though not direct talks) has taken place on numerous issues and occasions after the second.

What is concerning about the ongoing violence is that nothing is being done to reduce it. Despite repeated urgings by the international community – and at least two formal reprimands by the Co-Chairs of the peace process – Sri Lanka steadfastly refuses to disarm the Tamil paramilitaries. Instead, military intelligence is aggressively – even forcibly – recruiting more gunmen and expanding the scope of its war. The induction of newly constituted paramilitary units to the Jaffna peninsula in the past few weeks is the latest step in this war. Hopes that newly elected President Mahinda Rajapakse would be more prepared than his predecessor to rein in Sri Lanka's military intelligence and halt its campaign against the LTTE and its supporters have now been dashed. Efforts by the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) to arrange a meeting between military officials and the LTTE failed when the government – without explanation - withdrew permission for its officers to attend – even though the Army's new commander has also called for dialogue.

A plethora of names are being bounced around – shadow war, stealth war, subversive war, and so on. But no concrete action is being taken to arrest it. As this newspaper has argued before, any peace process can only make progress amidst a stable security environment for both protagonists. Since the February 2002 ceasefire was signed Sri Lanka's south has enjoyed security and stability – save a few high profile and isolated incidents and those, moreover, in recent times. But the security situation in the Northeast has been getting steadily worse for at least two years. Colombo's schoolyard politics of sneak attacks and claims of innocence have been tolerated by the international community for too long. The Co-chairs must exert their influence with the new Sri Lankan administration to demonstrably implement Clause 1.8 of the Ceasefire Agreement immediately. A period of mutual de-escalation and confidence building is a sine quo non if a meaningful peace process is to resume. It must begin with an end to the Army's covert onslaught.

## Sri Lankan Presidential Elections and the Future of Tamils

*By: P. Ramasamy - University of Kassel, Germany*

The lack of crucial Tamil support for the UNP presidential candidate Ranil Wickremesinghe paved the way for Mahinda Rajapakse of the SLFP to win the presidential elections with a narrow margin. If the vast majority of Tamils had cast their vote, Wickremesinghe would have won the post, even increasing his majority. But alas, Tamils refused to vote because they simply did not want the UNP to take them on another fruitless and dangerous road. Before the elections, it was clear to the LTTE and those freedom loving Tamils that presidential elections in the south mattered little to their long and arduous campaign for a just and peaceful solution to their plight. This led them to a logical and rational conclusion that nothing would be gained from exercising their vote to either one of the candidates. In this respect, the decision taken by the LTTE and the TNA was right and a correction decision, a decision

that would pave the way for the Tamils in the north and east to exercise their ultimate decision to self-rule.

The UNP under Wickremesinghe had the golden opportunity to regain the trust and confidence of Tamils, but he failed miserably. In the last days of the campaign having realized that Tamils might not vote for him, some of his party stalwarts sought a move to right by boasting about how they split the LTTE, sank their ships and obtained the confidence of Indian and United States to check the military pursuits of the LTTE. This was something done consciously and purposely for them to gain the support of the Sinhalese chauvinistic elements. But to his dismay, it was not good enough to wean away the support of the majority of Sinhalese from Rajapakse and it was political disaster that alienated the millions of Tamils. In the final analysis, Wickremesinghe had to pay for his political opportunism by losing the overwhelming support of the LTTE. It is no use now blaming the Tamils for not backing me, he was mainly responsible for alienating the Tamils. Of course the history of the UNP is replete with examples how successive leaders before Wickremesinghe had betrayed and alienated the Tamils on the grounds of their chauvinistic policies.

Rajapakse despite his close association with the right-wing Sinhala organizations like JVP and JHU, must thank the Tamils for not voting for Wickermesinghe. If they had, he would have gone into political oblivion, with no prospect of ever contesting for the coveted post. For the Tamil nationalist forces, it really does not matter to them who really become the president of Sri Lanka. In fact, there are grounds to believe that Rajapakse's victory would provide the crucial political circumstances for the Tamil nationalist forces to convey and to impress upon the international community that there is no way that Tamils would expect any justice and decency from the chauvinistic forces currently represented in the office of the president. In a more concrete sense, the election of Rajapakse and his avowed intention to review the ceasefire, question the role of Norway and talk tough with the LTTE have provided the Tamil nationalistic forces the necessary political impetus to chart the next course of history. For sometime since the signing of the ceasefire agreement in early 2002, pretensions of turning Sri Lanka into a federal state to meet the aspirations of Tamil have come to complete naught with the election of Rajapakse as the president.

The international safety net or sort of entrapment for the LTTE designed by Wickremesinghe in his early days as the prime minister must be in tatters. It should be remembered that this safety net was planned on the grounds of providing substantial autonomy for the Tamils in the north and east, but the recent elections have once and for all negated the question of autonomy for Tamils. Thus, in the absence of something substantial at least theoretically, the international safety net that was designed to check the separatist ambitions of the LTTE is a dead horse now. Wickermesinghe defeat in the elections has entombed the dead horse now.

So with the prospect of further real impediments to the peace process, the stage has been more less set for the respect communities, both Sinhalese and Tamils to pursue different political paths in the coming years. For the Tamil nationalist forces under the leadership of the LTTE, less time will be spend on convincing the international community of its bona fide nature. There is no need to do so anymore. Instead in the coming days and months, the LTTE will have to focus on the following issues that are related to the exercise of its ultimate option of a separate state. First, it has think of ways and means to regain lost ground in the east and tackle the prevalence of the para-military Tamil forces that working hand in hand with the Sri Lankan army intelligence. It is expected that Rajapakse with the advice of the ultra-ring elements would provide more support for the Tamil decadent forces united around a few disgruntled elements. In this context, the east would become much more volatile and dangerous, something that could not be avoided. The LTTE will never give up the east, it is an integral part of the Tamil homeland. Second, is the question regarding the Jaffna peninsula. The Sinhala army occupation will be less and less tolerated now. It is not that the LTTE cannot take Jaffna, for a long time they refrained from doing so because there was a prospect for peaceful settlement.

It is not that the Tamil national question cannot be resolved negotiated settlement, but the future prospect for such a direction seems rather slim given the change in the southern politics. The bluff of international military intervention to fight the LTTE seems a rather remote given the quagmire in Afghanistan and Iraq and the difficulty faced by the United States in imposing its will on North Korea and Iran. India has learnt some bitter lesson as well, but then with the intransigent power bloc in Sri Lanka, there is possibility that India might come around to see the rationale behind the ultimate option.

## LTTE teaches a lesson to those who play political games

**By: J. S. Tissainayagam Source: TamilCanadian**

An irony of ironies occurred on 17 November when a candidate popularly seen as representing Sinhala nationalism was elected to the country's highest office with the help of the LTTE, an

organisation, which he vowed during his election campaign to see tamed. Ranil Wickremesinghe, the candidate who portrayed himself as a "Sinhala-Buddhist," but coming forward as a "Sri Lankan" (one can read multiple meanings into "Sri Lankan") was relegated to a close also ran.

The warning signs were present from at least a week before with the LTTE declaring it regarded the election with supreme indifference though it did not advocate its boycott. The boycott was promoted by certain civic organisations, which in the south were construed as "front organisations of the LTTE."

The result was that the Sinhala ruling class epitomised by the UNP and the Bandaranaike loyalists of the SLFP, who had visions of using the elections to taste power, throw a few crumbs to the Tamils, while setting about crushing the JVP were left to lick their wounds. The traditional ruling families (Bandaranaike, Senanayake, Wijewardene) of the south, which the Tamils obligingly kept in power for 50 years, gave way to a new leadership, though once more through the efforts of the Tamils.

While all this might be true, the most important message coming through with the triumph of Mahinda Rajapakse is that the south is split down the middle about how to deal with the Tamil problem and the elections have brought the Tamils face to face with Sinhala chauvinism in its most virulent form.

The options before the Tamils were twofold: (a) help the election of Rajapakse who was head of a Sinhala extremist coalition that had on board the JVP and JHU, had renounced power sharing through federalism, rejected P-TOMS and expressed its frank disapproval of Norwegian facilitation or (b) Wickremesinghe who fought the election on the basis of offering a federal solution to the ethnic problem, but whose benign manifesto was to be backed by the international community expected to apply fetters on the Tigers as part of its fight against international terror. Of the two, the Tamils backed what they felt was the lesser evil.

The LTTE's action will, most probably, set in motion a certain dynamic in the south. For instance, there will be an ideological polarisation, with the UNP and sections of the SLFP that were portraying themselves as moderate, having to take on a more chauvinist stand, not only because half the electorate in the south has rejected moderation, but because it has not washed with the northeast either. One does not know whether this might even mean a change of leadership in UNP.

However, it is very unlikely that Rajapakse's victory is a prescription for immediate war. No southern leader can afford it. On the other hand, the extremist pronouncements in his manifesto to resolve the ethnic problem will require a new look at things, for which his government lacks the wherewithal. And even if it does have it, it is unlikely the Tigers are going to waste their time talking to someone who believes in a solution within a unitary state. The government and LTTE might negotiate to implement the CFA better, but it is hardly likely the two parties will get down to talks on substantive matters anytime soon.

It is also hardly likely that the coalition of extremist parties Rajapakse has led to power will act with crass irresponsibility. The BJP was in power in India: its rule might have heightened Hindutva chauvinism, but went a long way towards restoring better relations with Pakistan despite all the setbacks on the way. The record of the Likud in Israel over the Palestinian conflict is no different.

It has to be bourn in mind that Rajapakse is not a warmonger. The JVP too is not intrinsically chauvinist as the JHU – its racism is more to capture power. There are elements within the JVP which realise the ethnic problem has to be constructively dealt with. This element might not have shown its face because of strategic reasons, but one cannot deny its existence all the same.

Such extreme chauvinist posturing, combined with realisation it is not going to work in actual practice is what will lead to a period of limbo in the talks. As mentioned above, important existential issues such as the CFA could be addressed, but hardly anything more.

This situation of 'no war, no peace' will also suit the LTTE because it will not have to grapple with an enemy who will be constantly seeking to undermine it as the UNP would have done. Whatever might be the reason for Milinda Moragoda's outburst on the eve of the polls about the UNP having engineered the Karuna split within the LTTE, the fact is it did happen, and for which the UNP is now paying the price.

But while 'no war no peace' might not be anathema to the Tigers and Rajapakse, it will have a catastrophic effect on Colombo's elite, which expected a UNP president who would jumpstart the economy and resume the peace process (in that order). The Sri Lankan business classes, international investors, donors and the NGOs were all eagerly awaiting this but are now disappointed.

With the Rajapakse victory the almost automatic linkage with the globalised economy the business community was planning through large-scale privatisation and opening up for foreign investment and trade, would not be as forthcoming as it would have been if Wickremesinghe had won. Foreign aid, both bilateral and multilateral will continue to trickle in, subject to the strict conditions donors impose on regimes they do not like. The economic environment will be such that the modest 5-6% growth we have had will continue. Sri Lanka will survive, but mere economic survival was not what was expected if Wickremesinghe had emerged victor.

On the other hand, Sri Lanka could very well suffer in not being able to avail itself of special donor

funding such as the US\$ 4.5 billion it has been hoping for in the event the peace process resumed. It is well known that the donor community was hoping to pull out of Sri Lanka in late 2004 because nothing substantial was happening in the peace process. The tsunami stayed that decision. There is reason to think with Rajapakse and the LTTE not interested in substantive negotiations, the donor community might go ahead with the decision to support on-going programmes but not much more. This will be a body blow to Colombo.

However, the retreat of the western donors and investors would mean a very important development – India will be inevitably drawn into that vacuum. We know the closeness of India to the JVP and the Rajapakse camps and the assistance they have received in the past. Therefore, India playing a bigger role in Sri Lankan affairs is to be expected. And this role will not be confined to propping up the country economically, but politically too. And it is important to note that India's political role here will not be marred by inveterate LTTE-haters like the late Lakshman Kadirgamar, who muddied every effort at reaching a compromise on the ethnic question.

Despite Indian involvement, the Rajapakse regime in Colombo will be a considerably debilitated one in comparison to what Wickremesinghe would have commanded. And the LTTE will relish that situation. It knows only too well how the international community, including the majority of the co-chairs, put constraints on it on a number of occasions – the Washington and Tokyo conferences, statements by the EU, the U.S and human rights organisations being some of them. The Wickremesinghe regime also attempted to sign the CASA agreement with the US that would have given the west a strong foothold militarily in Sri Lanka. It was not signed due to firm Indian intervention. In fact, it could be said that ever since the CFA, the international community has twisted the LTTE's arm more than any government in Colombo.

While all these might be positive developments for the LTTE there are certain formidable challenges the Rajapakse presidency throws at the Tigers.

The most important of these is the anti-Tamil anger spewed by the JVP-JHU election campaign. While it was mentioned above that racist parties, once in office, become more moderate, it is not to suggest for a moment they become liberal or tolerant. It will be foolish to forget that Rajapakse has been propelled to power on the wheels of naked Sinhala racism. It is promises of not implementing P-TOMS or the ISGA, introducing the unethical conversions bill, settling the ethnic problem within a unitary state that convinced the Sinhala people to elect Rajapakse. And he cannot disappoint them.

Therefore, a vital constraint would be how soon a party that came to power on ethnic chauvinism will be able to transform itself to act responsibly on issues of governance. It has to convince its electorate that Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism does not pay and on the long run and makes the community more vulnerable. But accomplishing that will be a Herculean task, what with the UNP too becoming more hawkish, due to the exigencies of electoral politics.

The second challenge is the consequences of peace talks being in limbo for long and living conditions not changing for the Tamil population living as IDPs, or those unemployed due to the high security zones etc, etc. The northeast also lacks capital investment, a good industrial base, services and infrastructure. Talks in limbo will mean there will be no peace dividend and nothing to hope for except the bleakness the northeast has been 'enjoying' ever since the CFA. Over a period of time, civilian populations that see no respite for their suffering inevitably grow restive. If talks being in limbo help the Tigers in one way, dealing with domestic socio-economic issues will present a formidable challenge.

The third and the most crucial issue will be reaction of the international community. The EU, which is a prominent member of the international community put the LTTE on notice after the assassination of Kadirgamar with a travel ban and threat of proscription if the Tigers continued to default on human rights issues, democracy, pluralism etc. But the LTTE's indifference to the presidential poll and the resultant low turnout in the northeast demonstrates only too clearly that in matters affecting it most, the LTTE is prepared to defy the international community and incur its displeasure. But the fact remains the international community will use human rights, pluralism, democracy standards on the LTTE to weaken the organisation's political stance.

What the LTTE has to also take into account is that however unhappy the international community might be of the Rajapakse presidency, it will not go beyond a point when pressurising a government into making concessions to rebels. This is due to the international system's inherent prejudice against liberation movements, which it calls "international terrorism." Therefore, the hope in sections of the Tamil polity that the international community wanting to destabilise Rajapakse could do so by forcing Colombo to grant concessions to the Tigers, is a forlorn hope. Most probably the international community would use the Tamils to intimidate Rajapakse to making concessions on economic, trade and diplomatic issues that concern those countries, but stop well short of what the Tamils want.

There is also the very real possibility that the challenges thrown by these elements might matter to a head between the government and LTTE. And it cannot be overlooked in that respect too, the Tigers have found it easier dealing against presidents and governments in office after 1994, than before.

LTTE Leader Velupillai Prabhakaran has stated repeatedly that the Tamils do not want war, but will

not hesitate to take up the challenge if it is thrust upon them. And it is his National Heroes' Day address on 26 November we should now await.

## Politics: Tamils, LTTE and the elections

**By: J. S. Tissainayagam** Source: **Northeastern Monthly - December 2005**

Instructions to the Tamil people by the Sinhala ruling class were crisp: "Fifty percent of the south is expected to vote like donkeys. Another 50% will, hopefully, vote intelligently. It is your duty as a loyal minority in Sri Lanka to vote for Ranil Wickremesinghe and thereby return the UNP, darling of the ruling class, to power."

The unexpected however happened. The LTTE clearly enunciated its policy of not participating at the presidential elections. This was followed by various civic bodies, which the south interpreted were front organisations of the Tigers, declaring that the election be boycotted. The response from the north – Jaffna and the Wannu – was overwhelming, though not so enthusiastic in the east.

The call to boycott the polls came as a surprise to many Tamils. The reason for this was the LTTE had not indicated any overt hostility towards the UNP nor its leader, Wickremesinghe. In fact he was usually portrayed as someone keen on dialogue and negotiation, especially in comparison to former president Chandrika Kumaratunga.

In fact LTTE Leader Velupillai Prabhakaran said at his Great Heroes' Day address in 2004: "The leadership of the United National Party continues to insist that peace talks can be resumed based on our set of (ISGA) proposals, but the Kumaratunga government is imposing a condition for the resumption of talks."

The LTTE leader took this stance in November last year despite the open secret that it was the UNP, which was instrumental in instigating the Karuna rebellion. It has also been the Tigers' grouse the UNP was dragging its feet to negotiate the ISGA, or for that matter every other institution envisaged to be set up under the CFA to share power.

Even Tamils who were by no means UNP supporters, and aware of Wickremesinghe's subterfuges in the past, seemed to feel it was better that he were elected than Mahinda Rajapakse precisely because they felt that no Sinhala leader could deliver on the promises he / she made to the Tamils, and this had to be demonstrated.

When the UNP leader was upbraided for his inability to deliver on promises made to the LTTE leadership during the six rounds of talks in 2002-2003, he complained he was hamstrung by the Kumaratunga presidency. Tamils felt therefore, if he were elected this time, his tenure would demonstrate conclusively the inability of any Sinhala president to be fair by the Tamils due to the inveterate racism of the Sinhala ruling class expressed through parliament, the structural flaws of the constitution, the inability to carry the ultra-Sinhala nationalist parties on issues such as federalism and secularism etc. It would be then left to the Tamils and the LTTE to resolve whether they wished to remain as part of the Sri Lankan state, or go their way.

But the LTTE's strategy was smarter. It had learnt the most fundamental lesson the ceasefire taught the Tamils. It was that once the Tigers had been brought into the peace process, the international community had taken over the role of prime mover to keep the rebels talking, while an elaborate process was set in motion to undermine their political and military prowess. The Tamil rebel group also knew the UNP was much more astute in playing the game of trapping it (LTTE) in an international safety net than the SLFP / PA / UPFA or its aspiring leader, Rajapakse.

Second, Rajapakse's alliances with the JVP and JHU and the inward-looking economic policies he had espoused, would make him less savvy with the international community than Wickremesinghe. Rajapakse's worldview would deter his ability to capitalise on political, economic and military alliances with the west, and therefore let the LTTE that is under a lot of pressure from countries such as the United States, the EU and Japan, off the hook. The Rajapakse presidency would no doubt involve the Indian government more closely in Sri Lankan affairs, but the Tigers could be dealt with that.

The other benefit was the SLFP-based political leaderships' inability to direct military operations as effectively as the UNP. Military blunders such as Operation Jayasikurui and the occupation of Jaffna took place under the political leadership of Kumaratunga and her defence minister General Anuruddha Ratwatte. Even the Karuna rebellion that has undermined the LTTE greatly was masterminded by the UNP!

The LTTE's faith that the Rajapakse presidency would fail to instil confidence in the military hierarchy has been endorsed by recent happenings. Legislation passed by Kumaratunga to retain senior military officers at their posts after the mandatory retiring age of 55 has been rescinded by Rajapakse,

while moves are afoot to promote the president's brother, Colonel Gothabaya Rajapakse, to generalship reminiscent of Ratwatte's promotion soon after the PA victory in 1994.

While these substantial benefits are likely to accrue to the LTTE through the Rajapakse victory, there are also a number of incidental pluses in the fallout.

The boycott by the Tamils has rendered the victory of Rajapakse one of the slimmest in the history of presidential politics in Sri Lanka – 50.3% to 48.3%. The margin of 180,000 votes has affected the legitimacy of the Rajapakse victory, a matter compounded by allegations of electoral fraud. This has given Wickremesinghe the belief that he too has the backing of a large enough vote base to agitate against the president and government that would create instability and chaos in the south. And instability in the south is beneficial to the Tigers.

The boycott has also instilled in the LTTE tremendous confidence that its writ runs, even after three years of the ceasefire, in the government-controlled areas of the north and partially in the east. It has been repeated over and over again in the past few days that the LTTE had used compulsion to prevent the Tamil voters from exercising their franchise. But the question surely is not whether or not force was used; it is whether any institution that sees itself as a state, or quasi-state has the will and ability to enforce its authority. The Tigers demonstrated very clearly on 17 November their writ runs.

An attendant factor was the failure of Karuna to play the role of political godfather of the Tamil people of the east. Though it is true that some Tamils did not heed the call to boycott, at the same time they flouted with impunity Karuna's wish they vote for Rajapakse. Batticaloa Tamils voted overwhelmingly for Wickremesinghe.

Finally, Rajapakse's victory also means he has to deliver the bag of goodies promised in Mahinda Chinthanaya that will put him at loggerheads both with the multilateral donors as well as his supporters, thereby eroding his credibility in both camps.

The UNP has got on the propaganda offensive by portraying the Rajapakse presidency as one plunging the country in war. They support it by saying the LTTE had forced the polls boycott as a prelude to resuming military confrontation, and that Rajapakse too favours this because he does not have to deliver on the unrealistic promises made in Mahinda Chinthanaya.

This has however not been supported by Prabhakaran's Great Heroes' Day address. He said, "President Rajapakse has not grasped the fundamentals, the basic concepts underlying the Tamil national question...However, ... Rajapakse is considered a realist committed to pragmatic politics ... We have, therefore, decided to wait and observe, for sometime, his political manoeuvres and actions."

For all intents and purposes therefore talks on substantive matters are in limbo. There might be an exchange of views on the CFA to be initiated through the Norwegians if they are to continue to play a facilitating role, or whoever substitutes them. But it appears both sides are comfortable with each other and though there might be sabre-rattling neither side is expected to go to war unless provoked. In other words, the LTTE, rather than test Wickremesinghe's ability to deliver justice for the Tamils in the teeth of Sinhala chauvinism, is testing the far weaker leader Rajapakse.

But this does not mean that the LTTE is willing to see the rug pulled from beneath its feet. In his speech on 27 November the LTTE leader said, "This is our urgent and final appeal. If the new government rejects our urgent appeal, we will, next year, in solidarity with our people, intensify our struggle for self-determination, our struggle for national liberation to establish self-government in our homeland."

And it is in view of such an eventuality that the LTTE has ensured the election of a president whose party has had a poor record in military successes from 1994.

There are however a couple of factors that should not go un-addressed by the Tigers. They have managed to thwart the will of the international community, which hoped Wickremesinghe would become president. The international community that has repeatedly put the LTTE on notice on human rights and democracy issues would no doubt use the fallout from the low voter turnout in the north to tighten the screws on the rebels and their supporters. The UNP has already initiated the process domestically by alleging large sections of the voters had been disenfranchised.

An attendant consideration is that though the Rajapakse presidency might be unfavourable to the international community, it is not likely the west will let the Tigers off the hook completely. Whatever might be the regime in office in Colombo, the international community's policy towards the LTTE is primarily directed by its war on international terrorism.

Second, with talks remaining in limbo and no relief in sight either for the victims of war or the tsunami, coupled with very little coming by way of investment or employment in the northeast, the civilian population could become restive. The Tamils have, after all suffered the privations of war for 20 years. How long more can they go on? The support the LTTE was able to muster at the elections was indeed commendable. But to believe it will remain unchanged forever would be very foolish.