

# Satisfaction for Sinhala far right as Solheim is sidelined

There was intense diplomatic activity last week as Sri Lanka sought the removal of Erik Solheim as Norway's peace envoy, write Tamil Guardian staff writers.

THE SUDDEN announcement last week that the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Thorbjørn Jagland was to make a hurried visit to Colombo last week was received with optimism by the peace lobby. With the peace process at an impasse following Sri Lanka's refusal to lift the proscription on the Liberation Tigers, hopes for negotiations were fading. However, it soon became clear that a separate set of issues had arisen.

Jagland was accompanied by Erik Solheim, the veteran peace envoy who has been involved in prolonged shuttle diplomacy for over two years. But when Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Kumaratunge, accompanied by her attentive Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, met Jagland on Thursday night, Solheim was deliberately excluded. "It was an invitation to the (Norwegian) Foreign Minister and not for Mr. Solheim," reported the BBC, quoting embassy spokesman Tomas Stangeland.

Asked about the significance of Solheim being left out of the high-level talks, Tomas said: "I can't com-

ment on that."

A marathon session of discussion ensued. After four hours, Jagland boarded a redeye back to Oslo, with Solheim in tow. In Colombo meanwhile, the government informed the press about the discussion in a brief and terse press release, which concealed more than it revealed.

"It was decided that the Government of Norway will henceforth participate at a high level to advance the peace process involving the LTTE," the government statement said. What precisely was meant by that became clearer when Jagland spoke in Oslo on Friday, but in any case the Colombo-based press were already filing the reports.

"Solheim sidelined in peace process?" asked the Hindu. "Envoy dropped as Norway tries to revive Sri Lanka peace bid," said the AFP.

Political and diplomatic sources saw the one-paragraph government statement as a clear indication that Solheim had been sidelined after 15 months of shuttling between the LTTE and Colombo. The envoy's own

denials that his role had been reduced failed to shore up confidence, especially as Jagland admitted he would be playing a more prominent role.

Colombo's irritation with the indefatigable peace envoy has been growing for several weeks, as Solheim has continued his efforts to bring about negotiations between the protagonists. It was the envoy's refusal to play along with Colombo's efforts to reap propaganda mileage out of the peace process by painting the LTTE as intransigent and opposed to peace, that seems to have been the main reason for Sri Lanka to seek his removal.

Kadirgamar is said to be a key backer of the Sri Lankan demand. It was only a month ago that the Foreign Minister heaped praise on Solheim and the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Jon Westborg - reportedly a close friend of Kadirgamar - for their efforts.

"The indefatigable endeavours of these two gentlemen and their associates towards that end have earned the deep appreciation of the Government of Sri Lanka," Kadirgamar said on May 10, in a statement claiming that agreements had been reached between his government and the LTTE.



Meeting between representatives of the Norwegian government and the LTTE early last year. Around the table from the left, Raymond Johanson, Thorbjørn Jagland, Erik Solheim, the Liberation Tigers chief negotiator Anton Balasingham and his wife Adele.

In fact there was no agreement and the LTTE angrily denied it, triggering a wave of confusion which replaced the euphoria in Colombo. The crisis broke when Solheim also denied that any agreement had been reached, humiliating Kadirgamar.

Kadirgamar's animosity snowballed when Solheim was called by the United States' Department of State to provide an update on

Oslo's peace process. In an intense series of meetings, Solheim had briefed and answered questions by officials at several senior sections. Some press reports said that Solheim had requested the US to urge both protagonists in Sri Lanka to seek a political settlement. But it was clear that speaking in the wake of an abortive Sri Lankan offensive and Colombo's refusal for four months to reciprocate the LTTE's ceasefire, on whom the pressure was needed.

Whether Solheim made the request or not became irrelevant, the reports earned him the fury of the Sinhala far right, which in any case, has always been opposed to foreign peace efforts in the Sri Lanka's conflict - and Kadirgamar.

Sri Lanka's hawkish Prime Minister, Ratnasiri

Wickremanayake, last month suggested Solheim should admit his "failure" to broker talks and quit. "What the Norwegian envoy must now do is realise that he cannot solve this problem and leave without further internationalising the issue," the prime minister quoted an unidentified source as saying.

The Sinhala nationalist press has been increasingly vitriolic, calling for punitive

action against Solheim for seeking US assistance in Oslo's peace efforts. The sentiments have been echoed by the Buddhist leadership which called for him to be declared persona non grata.

The victory of the Sinhala far right in getting Solheim, now a household name amongst the Tamils and Sinhalese alike, removed now threatens to become another issue across Sri Lanka's ethnic divide.

# Distress of war proves mother of invention

A PALMYRAH leaf cutter, a new device invented by a fifteen-year-old girl from Mannar district won the first place in the new invention competition held among students in the northeast province, reported TamilNet last week. "The distress caused by war activates human minds to explore new devices to overcome the difficulties in the day to day life; and in the process new inventions are made", said Mr.M.Selvin Irenius, Provincial Director of Industries delivering keynote address at the award distribution event held Monday at Trincomalee St.Mary's College Monday.

The Sri Lanka Invention Commission in collaboration with the Provincial

Ministry of Education, Cultural Affairs and Sports Monday announced the winners of the competition at the end of two-day exhibition of new inventions. Provincial Director of Education of the Northeast Mr.E.Sivanandan presided.

Palmyrah leaves are used for knitting mats, boxes, winnowing fans and other products widely used by Tamils in the rural parts of the north and east of Sri Lanka. Palmyrah leaves are cut by hand to produce these items. This process is not satisfactory, as all the leaves cannot be cut to standard size. This practical problem has now been overcome by the invention of a new device called Palmyrah Leaf Cutter by Miss.J.Renika Croos of

St.Mary's Maha Vidyalayam in Pesalai in the Mannar district.

The new device, apart from securing a refined finish, also saves considerable time spent on cutting the leaves manually.

Mr.Selvin Irenius said, "Palmyrah products lacked export markets because the products were rugged. The new invention would help refinement and also save time and cost."

Miss Renika Croos won the first prize for her invention in the senior competition. In the junior competition Master T.Samithan of Mannar Siththiviniyagar Hindu College won the first prize for his invention-a Motor driven drawing pen.



Innovation rewarded: young inventors to the rescue in time of war

# Light work of necessity in Vanni

AN IMPROVISED tin-lamp using waste plastics to produce light is one of the 72 new inventions of the students in the northeast province displayed at the two-day exhibition inaugurated Sunday morning in Trincomalee St.Mary's College, reported TamilNet last week. The improvised lamp is one of the inventions by students of Vanni region held by Liberation Tigers, which is under an economic blockade by the Sri Lankan government.

This type of lamps is currently used by the people of

Vanni region to overcome the acute shortage of kerosene due to embargo. Electricity supply is not provided to Vanni region.

People in the region depend on a small quantity of kerosene permitted to be taken in. Students find difficult to study without proper light facilities, and hence the invention of a lamp manufactured from discarded tins, using waste plastics to produce light.

The Sri Lanka Inventors' Commission in collaboration with the Northeast Provincial Ministry of

Education has organized the two-day exhibition. Northeast Provincial Director of Education Mr.E.Sivanandan declared the event open Sunday morning

"The exhibition of this nature are being held throughout the country on provincial basis to bring the hidden skills of the students to light, to create an awareness among school children about the invention and to eliminate the fear that exist in students to make invention", said a spokesman of the Sri Lanka Invention Commission.

# Mannar rape suspects secure 'safe' trail

THE MANNAR judge M.H.M Ajmeer instructed the Superintendent of the Anuradhapura prison that the 14 Police and Sri Lanka Navy personnel accused in the rape and torture of two women in Mannar on 19 March need not be produced in court Wednesday following an interim order by the Court of Appeal, legal sources told TamilNet last Tuesday.

The Sri Lanka Navy in Mannar also sent a certified copy of the interim order dated 31 May 2001 to the magistrate on behalf of a naval rating who had petitioned the Court of Appeal that the case in which he and 13 security forces personnel are accused of raping and torturing two women in custody be transferred to "Anuradhapura or an appropriate Court" for security reasons.

Human rights activist say that by getting such cases against them transferred to courts in Sinhala areas or in Colombo is a standard ruse by Sri Lankan security forces personnel to effectively stymie prosecution.

The naval rating Noroshan Kollure states in his appeal that he would not be safe in Mannar because a Sergeant of the Police Counter Subversive Unit (CSU) was killed there on 24 May. Human rights sources in Mannar, however, say that the circumstances of the CSU sergeant's killing should be properly investigated.

On 23 May, the day before the 14 suspects were to be produced in court, Inspector of Police of the Criminal Investigation Department Kamal Perera had informed the Superintendent of the Anuradhapura prison he had intelligence that there was a threat to their (the suspects') lives in Mannar and hence requested him (the Superintendent) not to send them to court on 24 May when the case was scheduled to be heard. The two women were arrested on the night of 19 March and were gang raped and tortured by several service and police personnel from about 11 p.m. that night till around 5 a.m. the next morning, human rights workers and lawyers said.

# Refugees fight relocation

SRI LANKAN security forces told government officials in Trincomalee to transfer over 1500 internally displaced Tamil persons from Alles Garden refugee camp to Kuchchaveli, 38 kilometres north of Trincomalee town. "The security forces in Trincomalee have taken this step to ensure the security of army and navy camps in the area", TamilNet quoted a government official as saying, last Wednesday.

Refugees protest that they won't leave the Alles Garden refugee camp at any cost as their lives would be in danger if they are resettled in the Kuchchaveli division. The decision to relocate the refugees comes in the wake of an accidental explosion of a landmine on Farm Road, Uppuveli on 27 May, according to a senior government official.

There are five Sri Lanka army and Navy camps and four sentries in the general area of Uppuveli-Thuravankaadu where the Alles Garden refugee camp is situated.

Civil authorities in Trincomalee are not in favour of the army's move. Officials say that internally displaced persons (IDP) cannot be resettled in their villages without their (the IDPs) consent. Most of their villages were destroyed in SLA operations in 1986 and 1990-1992.

The SLA does not favour



In harms way: refugees protest at relocation to more dangerous area

resettlement of civilians in the destroyed Tamil villages north of Trincomalee. The large Tamil villages of Thennamaravaadi and Thiriyai in the northern Trincomalee have remained derelict for more than four years due to SLA opposition to resettlement here.

The SLA has also opposed and discouraged resettlement of Tamils in northern Trincomalee to promote the interests of Sinhala colonists whom it settled here following the systematic

destruction of the traditional Tamil villages since 1985.

The International Committee of Red Cross maintains that the present conflict should come to an end for the displaced living in camps and welfare centres in the Trincomalee to return their own villages. At a press briefing held in the eastern port town on 25 April, Mr. Daniel Sc-hriber, Head of the Sub Delegation of the

I.C.R.C in Trincomalee categorically stated that the International Committee of Red Cross cannot ensure security for resettling people in Kuc-hchaveli, Thiriyai villages in the north of Trincomalee district.

Mr. Schriber said that the Sri Lankan Government security personnel would not prefer resettlement of the displaced in this part of the district at this juncture.

# Vavuniya quota fuels corruption

THE RESTRICTIONS on the issue of fuel to the public in the Sri Lanka army controlled areas of the Vavuniya region is contradictory to the principles of governance and therefore should be removed forthwith, said the Union of Christian Churches in Vavuniya in a letter addressed to Major General S.H.Shantha Kottegoda, Commander of the Security Forces in Vanni this week, reported TamilNet.

The Union says that unscrupulous elements, including government soldiers are profiteering from the restricted quota system of the SLA under which fuel is issued to civilians in the northern border town.

Each registered motor-bike in Vavuniya is issued 15 litres of petrol per month, each car 50 litres of petrol, each lorry 200 litres of diesel, auto-rickshaws 100 litres of petrol, tractors 100 litres of diesel and vans are issued 100 litres of diesel per month under the fuel quota system of the SLA.

Farmers who own water pumps which run on kerosene are issued 3 litres of petrol per month. Residents and businessmen in the northern border town say that the restrictions are unrealistic and gives rise to a lot of corruption.

"Vavuniya and its suburbs are saturated with Sri Lankan security forces. So why restrict fuel? After all these years it would be foolish on the part of the army to still believe that the LTTE expects to survive on the minuscule quantities of fuel that may slip out of the saturated security network of the army and Police in Vavuniya. This is a busy and populated town and everyone needs fuel", said a senior government official.

The fuel restriction is the bane of travellers who arrive in Vavuniya in their vehicles unaware of the quota system. If they are short of fuel for their journey they cannot buy petrol or diesel in Vavuniya town without a permit

Introducing  
**.NET Technology@WCC**  
Westminster College of Computing

- ◆ **New Courses available for the First time in London**  
i-Net Certification, Enterprise JavaBeans VB.NET and other Microsoft .Net technologies
- ◆ **Enterprise /Corporate e-Commerce with ASP, JSP and PHP**  
Web Design, VB and JavaScript, iPlanet, ASP, ASP+ XHTML, Java, WebServer, Java Services, ColdFusion Oracle Web, XML, PHP, SOAP, Java Server Pages
- ◆ **m-Commerce and WAP with Java Servlets & ASP**  
WML, WMLScript, Psion O/S
- ◆ **e-Commerce Infrastructure & Management**  
e-Commerce Security, Connectivity & Support Internetconnectivity & Router management, Voice Over IP, PKI, CA and Firewalls
- ◆ **Software Development & Project Management**  
Visual Basic 6 Client/Server Java 2, C++, C#, (Sharp) Software Testing, Microsoft Project, Programming OOP, ActiveX, COM, DCOM, CORBA & RMI
- ◆ **Database Management & Client Server Programming**  
Oracle 8i, Developer 2000 Form 6i, Reports 6i With SQL, PL/SQL, DBA, Sybase, SQL Server 7.0 Oracle 8i Administration, JDeveloper, WebDB
- ◆ **MCP/MCSE Certification/PC-network support**  
Windows2000, Unix System Admin, PC Assembly, Exchange Server, Linux-RHCE, Sun Solaris Admin, TCP/IP, IIS, System Engineering

Introductory courses and Office Skills towards ECDL exam. Full-time and Part-time studies leading to Diplomas and City & Guilds OCR, Oracle OCP and Sun certifications

**020 7287 6299**  
5 Sherwoods St, Piccadilly Circus, LondonSwiss Cottage  
Branch 020 7435 5001  
E-mail: aras@wcc.co.uk http://www.wcc.co.uk  
Pay a visit to our E-Commerce website: http://www.e-ShopSurfer.com