

# Bloodied student leader in court as protests continue

THE JAFFNA University was scheduled to reopen Monday, following widespread protests over its closure in the past two weeks, press reports said. The vice chancellor of the university, Professor Balasund-arampillai, said the president of the University Grants Commission R.R.P Mendis, had given him the go ahead to do so. "Students can return to their usual curricular activities from Monday" he was quoted as saying.

However, it was not clear what the response of the students would be: the demonstrations initially began over the assault, arrest and torture in custody of a student leader by the Sri Lanka Army (SLA). As students protested, the authorities shut the Jaffna University down. "We will continue to boycott lectures until our colleague Thivyan's release from military custody", the students said early last week.

The undergraduate detained by the Sri Lanka Army since 2 July was produced before a judge in the north-

ern town last Tuesday. Krishnasamy Thivviyan, told the judge in open court that he bled from his nose and mouth when he was severely assaulted in detention. The judge remanded the student until 24 July.

The judge directed the Police to admit Thivviyan to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital and to obtain a medical report about his condition. He also directed the Police to provide security to the student at the hospital. The judge said that he cannot release Thivviyan on bail until he receives the Attorney General's report on the matter. The undergraduate showed the blood soaked handkerchief with which he had wiped his bleeding nose and mouth after he was assaulted by soldiers who arrested and detained him.

Meanwhile, a related furore was triggered by when the peninsula's sole Tamil daily Uthayan, on 20 July, when it published a story on the refusal of the striking university students

to meet the chief of the paramilitary Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP).

According to a report in the Uthayan early last week, the students had declined the Sri Lankan military's suggestion that their issues should be taken up with Douglas Devananda, who is also Sri Lanka's Rehabilitation Minister. The embarrassed EPDP criticised the Uthayan and denied it had made such a request to meet the students.

"It is untrue of Uthayan to claim that the students refused to have a meeting with Minister Douglas Devananda. The minister never invited any representative of the Jaffna University Students Union to discuss the situation with the university. We emphasise this", the paramilitary group which conducts counterinsurgency alongside the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) said in a statement. However, the EPDP's statement has been categorically rejected by Uthayan's editor on the 20 July issue. "We insist that [our] story



Eastern University students decry the government's denial of the right to education

was a hundred percent accurate," he said. "Our paper did not allege that minister Douglas had invited university students or their representatives to discuss the current situation. The university's student representatives said that they had categorically rejected advice given to them by the Sri Lankan military and a senior university official to speak to

Douglas Devananda about the current crisis, said the report. It never implied that the minister had invited anyone."

Ironically however, the EPDP, keen to be seen as the civil administrators of the region, had on July 12, claimed that one of its officials, Manipallavarajan Nishanthan, had been in discus-

sion with student representatives regarding the closure of the University. "It is well known that the Jaffna University Students Union vehemently denied any such discussions with an EPDP representative. The EPDP is yet to give a clear explanation for this contradiction," the Uthayan mused in its report Friday.

# Soldier on massacre charge assaults court journalist

A LOCAL journalist was assaulted in court premises last Wednesday by a Sri Lankan soldier suspected of involvement in the Mirusuvil massacre of civilians. The suspect is one of fourteen soldiers accused of killing several Tamil civilians in Mirusuvil and disposing of their bodies in a shallow grave.

The attack on the reporter took place when the accused were taken to the court in Point Pedro, where the Chavakachcheri Magistrate's Court is sitting under heavy security. The suspect, R.M.S.Ratnayake, reportedly assaulted Velupillai Thavachelvan when the latter was taking photographs.

Mr.Thavachelvan is the President of Jaffna Media Association, and a correspondent for local and foreign news agencies. He was among several local journalists present at the court. The journalists said they had obtained permission from the court to take photographs.

The incident was brought to the notice of the Magistrate, Mr.Annalingam Premshankar, in writing. Mr.Premshankar then reprimanded the suspect and ordered him to tender an

apology in open court to the journalist concerned. The Magistrate also issued a stern warning to the Army officer who brought the suspects to court.

Meanwhile, further inquiry into the Mirusuvil massacre has been transferred to Anuradhapura on the instruction of the Attorney General, said the Magistrate. Seven Tamil civilians, including a five-year old child were killed and their bodies buried at Mirusuvil in December 2000.

The civilians were arrested by SLA soldiers when they went to Mirusuvil area on December 19, to collect their personal belongings from their homes. The victims had been displaced from Mirusuvil and were living in Point Pedro.

Hundreds of Tamil civilians have disappeared in Sri Lanka military custody in Jaffna, human rights groups say. An estimated six hundred were tortured to death or deliberately killed in military custody, according to Amnesty International. Most were buried in shallow graves in the peninsula, the human rights organisation said. No security service personnel have been charged for these deaths.

# Skirmishes continue across Tamil areas

TEN Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers were wounded, four of them seriously when Liberation Tigers set off a powerful claymore mine in Jaffna town around 8.30 a.m. last Monday, TamilNet reported. The attack took place at Hospital road-Temple road junction, about 50 meters from a Sri Lanka Army sentry post. Four women security personnel (home guards) were killed in an ambush by the Liberation Tigers at Sithamparapuram, about 12 km. south-east of Vavuniya, around 4.45 p.m. Thursday. The homeguards were returning home after duty in the Sithamparapuram area when they were attacked.

A military trained policeman was shot dead by unidentified gunmen suspected of being members of the Liberation Tigers at Kallady, 3 km. south of Batticaloa town, around noon Saturday. The incident took place about 200 metres from Manchaththoduvaai police sentry post.

The Liberation Tigers attacked a sentry post in the Manal Aaru region in the north-east of the island, killing three government troops, last Monday the Voice of Tigers (VoT) radio said. LTTE fighters attacked the sentry post that was situated between the Sri Lanka Army camp at Kokku-thoduvaai and Koddaikeery, around 12 midnight Sunday, the radio said. The Tigers recovered two bodies of the soldiers and weapons including a light machine gun from the sentry post.

The radio also said four LTTE members died in confrontations with Sri Lankan troops during the period between 13 and 16 July. Two SLA soldiers were wounded, one of them seriously in an ambush by the Liberation Tigers at Vaari-kuddiyoor,

16 km. northwest of Vavuniya, around 5.15 p.m. Wednesday, army sources in the northern town said. The soldiers, a sergeant and a lieutenant, were cycling when they were fired upon.

Soldiers from a nearby sentry post rushed to the scene and commandeered a public transport bus to transport the wounded colleagues to Anuradhapura hospital. The bus was later brought to the Pampaimadhu SLA camp. Two SLA soldiers were wounded and another was reported missing when the Liberation Tigers attacked an army detachment at Mahindapura, at about 10.30 a.m. also last Wednesday.

Mahindapura is one of the new state-sponsored Sinhalese settlements established about 22km south of Tamil dominated Muttur area, and it is the gateway to the Tamil dominated Eechchilampattu division, which comprises more than ten Tamil villages. Tamils living in this village are regularly harassed by security personnel when they go to Mahindapura to buy their provisions, villagers said.

In October last year, seven Tamil peasants of Poonaagar in the Eechch-

ilampattu division were shot dead by some Sinhalese home guards who were assisting army personnel stationed at Mahindapura.

A trooper of the elite Special Task Force (STF) was seriously wounded when an Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) was hit by a claymore mine blast at Thetraathivu, about 20 km. south of Batticaloa last Wednesday at 10 am. The claymore was placed under a culvert on the Kalmunai road. The troops were travelling from Kalmunai to Chettipalayam. In a separate incident, an LTTE sniper wounded a Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldier around 5 p.m. last Tuesday. The soldier was manning a sentry post at Kinnaiyadi, a hamlet in Valaichenai, north of Batticaloa. The Tigers fired at the sentry post from the Western hinterland. Several civilians were assaulted by soldiers following the attack, local sources said.

A military-trained police officer was shot dead Sunday before last by unidentified attackers, believed to be members of the Liberation Tigers, at Aalankerni, a suburb in Kinniya, about 10 km. north west of Trincomalee town.

# Death at a checkpoint

A 35 YEAR old man was shot and killed by Sri Lanka Army soldiers manning a sentry post at Siththaandy, 22 km. north of Batticaloa, around 5 p.m. Friday, local residents said. The victim is a father of one, and was identified as Veerappan Kanapathapillai.

They said the soldiers from Morakoddanchenai, who were manning the sentry post, stopped the victim and questioned him before they opened fire and killed him

on the spot. He was reportedly on his way to a rice mill when he was stopped.

The army claimed the troops opened fire at the man because he started to run upon observing the soldiers at the sentry post. The army handed over the body at the Eravur hospital where an inquest was held. His 7-month pregnant wife identified the body at the hospital. Villagers say there had not been any confrontations in the area today.

# Army officer threatens Tamil reporter

AIYATHURAI Nadesan, a prize winning Tamil journalist in the eastern town of Batticaloa, was threatened by the commanding officer of the Sri Lanka Army's 23-3 brigade last week, press reports said. The Sri Lanka Tamil Media Alliance (SLTMA) and the Eastern Lanka Journalists' Association (ELJA) issued statements Friday condemning the intimidation.

The SLA officer warned the journalist that he would be arrested under the prevention of terrorism act (PTA) for his writings against the government and the security forces. The SLA officer further reminded Mr.Nadesan that hundreds of Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) activists were shot and killed for putting posters against the government. Mr. Nadesan was also photographed from different angles by the security forces in a bid to intimidate him, press reports said. The SLTMA later said it considers these actions as a threat to his life.

"The SLTMA are surprised and concerned that a warning of this nature was issued on the same day that the government announced the relaxation of the restrictions placed on journalists from entering areas outside security forces control," the statement from the SLTMA said. The ELJA issued a similar statement. Mr. Nadesan is the Vice-President of the SLTMA. He received the best Journalist award for 2000, from the Editors Guild.

Chief Editor Mr. S.M. Gopalaratnam and his deputy Mr. K. Rushangan of the only daily published in Batticaloa, were also summoned by the same army officer a few days earlier and warned.

# STF troops conscript Tamil civilians into hard labour

VILLAGERS of Puthukudiyiruppu, about 12 km. south of Batticaloa, are being forced to carry out hard labour by troopers of the elite Special Task Force stationed in the village, TamilNet reported Sunday. The troops summoned 25 villagers to the camp on Sunday and ordered them to clear jungles and shrubs along Manmunai lagoon, said sources in the eastern town.

On Saturday troops

ordered at least 30 local fishermen to clear jungles from 9 a.m. till 6 in the evening. A fisherman told TamilNet sources that he was returning to the shores with his colleagues around 6 a.m. Saturday, when troops ordered 30 of them to report at the camp at 9 a.m. "We were ordered to clean the jungles on the shore the whole day," he said.

Also on Friday troops escorted villagers to clear jungles on the Manmunai

coast. But when the STF observed LTTE men on the other side of the lagoon, they brought the civilians to the camp and held them till 7 p.m.

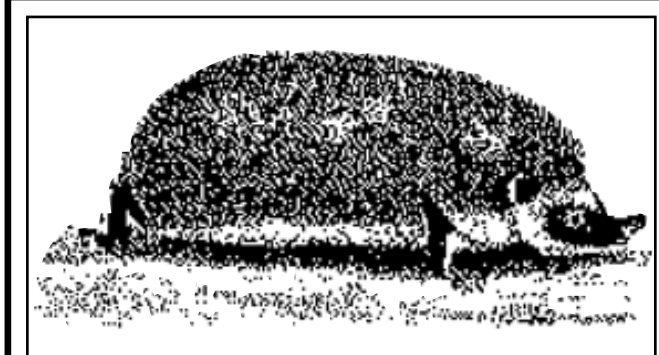
Local parliamentarians and human rights organisations have been accusing government troops of forcing villagers surrounding their camps into doing work, such as cleaning toilets, clearing shrubs, and building defences, in and around their camps.

Villagers told TamilNet sources that working in and around the camps can be dangerous due to unexploded ordnance.

Manmunai is on the eastern coast of the Batticaloa lagoon. Ferry service from Manmunai connects Kokkaddicholai, a large village in the western hinterland which is under the control of the Liberation Tigers. The ferry carries the greater part of the traffic to and from the western shore (Paduvaankarai).



Respite: Three Tamil children on their way home from collecting relief supplies from aid workers. An estimated four hundred thousand Tamils in the Vanni live under an economic blockade imposed by the Sri Lankan government.



## POINTS TO PONDER

### Strong Arm Tactics

As expected, Sri Lanka's thugs in uniform were hard at work to defend the government from the besieging hordes. Young, old, innocent and guilty were all fair game, as recent events appeared to demonstrate. Singer

Mariasselle Gunatillake who attempted to be a good Samaritan by providing water to some demonstrators got short shrift from riot police. Her reward was a few well-placed tear gas canisters fired towards her residence.

Ms. Gunatillake said she also said that she saw police dragging an elderly

person who had come to collect his child from school, despite having proved his identity. As a parting gesture, a disgusted Ms. Gunatillake has indicated that she would make a decision whether to remain in this country or migrate to a civilized country.

### Restraint?

So the Minister Samaraweera believes the police behaved in a "restrained manner" during the break-up of a recent opposition protests. Judging from eyewitness accounts, the respected minister evidently wasn't present on the front lines.

Eyewitnesses including private television stations say they saw President's Security Division members direct attacks against civilians at Nugegoda during opposi-

tion protests. Another witness said he clearly saw PSD officers directing riot squads to fire tear gas at UNP leader Ranil Wickremasinghe. "He had a narrow shave," the witness said, adding that Wickremasinghe's vehicle was hit several times. If that was restraint, we wonder what excessive force is.

### Pecking A Fight

Don't call me chicken - that what a fighting cock would say. Yes, an admittedly stale gag, but here's a story of a couple of prize-fighting roosters whose handlers were recently busted. Police raided the cock fighting betting centre in Negombo where transactions amounting to over Rs. 300,000 daily had been taking place over the past six years in a well-

organised gambling operation under political cover. "Investigators said nobody came forward to complain about the betting centres as they were patronised by underworld gangs and powerful politicians," reports said. And no one wants to peck a fight with those guys.

### Powerful Rubbish

Ever thought that rubbish could be a source of energy? Yes, we're talking garbage, quite literally, solving the island's power crisis and Colombo's waste crisis in one go. "Loads of stinking garbage would be put to good, productive use when a Sri Lankan company and a British firm jointly launches a series of garbage-powered electricity generation plants," reports said.

The company is nego-

tiating with the Colombo Municipal Council to supply garbage on a regular basis. Your garbage could be the fuel for the future.

### Better Late Than Never?

Sri Lanka may have somewhat of a disposition for tardiness, but recent news that a panel has been formed to probe the 1983 anti-Tamil riots in Colombo certainly redefines that reputation. "President Chandrika Kumaratunga has named the members of a three man commission which will inquire into the 1983 anti-Tamil riots in Colombo and other parts of the island," reports said. "The commission will be chaired by former Chief Justice S. Sharavananda, a Tamil; Mr. M.M.Zuhair PC, a Muslim; and Mr. S.S.Sahabandhu PC, a

Sinhala."

We expect this investigation - like all commitments, inquiries and probes - to be another exercise in futility

### Cut! Cut! Cut!

Please fasten your seatbelts and ensure your tray tables and seats are in the upright position and hold on, there's more turbulence for SriLankan airlines.

They've anno-unced further cost-cutting measures recently including reducing the number of flights and withdrawing Sri Lankan staff attached to its overseas offices in Kuwait, Doha, Oman, Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia and Paris. They're being asked to return home, reports said, and a certain apprehension seems to be stalking the company:

"No one seems to be aware as to what will happen to them on their arrival in Colombo." And as a further cost cutting measure the airline is planning to stop flights to Sydney Doha, Stockholm and Beirut in September. Welcome aboard.

### I Am Not A Number

Oh yes, you are, as far as Sri Lanka's census collectors are concerned. To make the islandwide headcount easier, enumerators have requested Sri Lankans to stay at home for the census. The government also issued the following announcement: "The your dog, keep the gates open, let at least one light be on in the house and be awake until census officials visit you." Now let's see...785,450, 785,451.