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PA-JVP pact is a serious blow to peace - LTTE

THE Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) declared Monday that the formation of a probationary government with an alliance between the People's Alliance (PA) regime and the Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Perumana (JVP) effected a serious blow to the peace process in Sri Lanka.

Commenting on the current political developments in Colombo, Mr. Anton Balasingham, the LTTE's chief



Negotiator: Balasingham

negotiator and political advisor told the Tamil Guardian that one of the clauses of the 'Memorandum of Understanding' reached between the PA and the JVP strictly forbids any discussions on proposals relating to the solution to the Tamil national question.

Asked about the recent statements made by President Chandrika Kumaratunga and the Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar claiming that the PA-JVP agreement would not affect the peace talks with the LTTE, Mr. Balasingham dismissed such claims as 'utter nonsense'.

"Clause 20 of the MOU clearly states that proposals for devolution of power and any other proposals in relations to a political solution to the Tamil national question should not be taken up for discussion during the probationary period of one year. Is there any meaning and



Lighting the touch paper: Leaders of Sri Lanka's JVP, characteristically standing on the extreme left and the extreme right light a lamp as they box in the ruling PA leaders.

purpose in entering into a peace process if we cannot discuss any proposals for a negotiated settlement?" Mr. Balasingham asked.

"The truth is that the PA-JVP agreement has made the peace talks an impossible task. The utterances made by the President and by the Foreign Minister Mr. Kadirgamar are simply propaganda stuff intended for the consumption of the international governments who are disillusioned with the unholy matrimony between a corrupt, weak government and the orthodox Marxist diehards who are opposed to peace and international facilitation", he said.

"Neither the PA nor the JVP have a coherent vision with regard to a permanent solution to the ethnic conflict and the civil war that has torn the country apart. Operating with mutually contradictory ideologies the new partners of this probationary administration have articulated conflicting views on the Tamil question. While PA professes vague notions of 'devolution' the JVP entertains a utopian ideal of 'equality for all'. But neither of them is prepared to discuss the core demands of the Tamil people that underlie the Tamil national question,"

Mr. Balasingham said.

"We have repeatedly stated that it is the Tamil people who have to ultimately decide their own political status and destiny, not the Sinhala political parties who assume power in Colombo. If there is no Sinhala consensus on the core demands of the Tamils as enunciated at Thimpu talks the Tamil people will be left with no choice other than to seek their own path to liberation", Mr. Balasingham explained.

On the question of invoking the Norwegian peace initiative Mr. Balasingham blamed President Kumaratunga and Mr. Kadirgamar for mar-

ginalising and downgrading the Norwegian chief negotiator Mr. Solheim thereby causing a deadlock in the Norwegian effort. "Sri Lanka has killed the Norwegian peace effort simply because of a pathological suspicion that the peace envoy was partial and favorably disposed towards the LTTE. It was a grave diplomatic blunder. Such unilateral interventions by one party in tripartite relations are totally unacceptable to us. Norwegian facilitatory process can only be resurrected by re-instating Mr. Solheim as the chief negotiator", the LTTE's political advisor commented.

Mr. Balasingham further said that the Kumaratunga government is eager to initiate the peace talks as a desperate effort to overcome the current politico-economic crisis but not with the sincere intention of resolving the ethnic conflict through negotiated political settlement. "In its desperation the government seems to be contemplating declaring a unilateral cease-fire. Such measures will not be viewed as an act of good faith but rather as a ruse to implicate the LTTE with the ultimate motive of demonising it as the villain of peace."

"If the government is sin-

cere and serious about engaging the LTTE in a process of negotiations, it should take measures to annul Clause 20 of the PA-JVP agreement and create conditions of normalcy in the Tamil homeland for a specific period by totally lifting the economic embargo. As we have already stated, the government should also recognise the LTTE as the authentic representatives of the people of Tamil Eelam by de-proscribing our liberation movement", Mr. Balasingham said.

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UN calls for protection of children in war

IN a just issued report to the United Nations Security Council, Secretary-General Kofi Annan recommends that the international community take concrete steps to protect children in war-affected areas, said the U.N. website on Friday. "In the armed conflicts of recent years, children have featured centrally as targets of violence, and occasionally - even unwillingly - as perpetrators," the Secretary-General writes. "A large number of children have been directly affected by armed conflict, many of them uprooted from their homes and communities, maimed, or killed. Others have been made orphans, abducted, abused and

exploited." Among his proposals, Mr. Annan suggests the inclusion by the Council of provisions for monitoring children's rights within the mandates of peace missions. The report also calls for more attention to be paid to the impact of war on girls, an issue which the Secretary-General says is "particularly damaging for future generations." Already disadvantaged in peacetime, girls undergo sexual abuse and enslavement during war, he says, urging that sexual violence against women and children continue to be prosecuted as a war crime. In addition, the report highlights the impact of

HIV/AIDS on children in conflict situations and the role of truth commissions. As signs that progress is possible, the report points to recent developments such as Rwanda's enactment of legislation that enables girls, including tens of thousands who became heads of households after the 1994 genocide, to inherit farms crucial to their survival, and Sierra Leone's establishment of a National Commission for War-Affected Children. Humanitarian access in the Sudan has been improved, the text states, and Colombia has raised its age of recruitment into the armed forces to 18.

EU agrees apology for slavery

THE European Union agreed Friday to a carefully worded apology for slavery, perhaps resolving one of two key issues deadlocking the UN conference against racism, the International Herald Tribune reported. The eight-day U.N. meeting went into a ninth day when compromises on the two dominant issues - the Middle East conflict and the legacy of slavery - failed to materialize. The United States and Israel had pulled out their delegations halfway through the conference due to anti-Israel language in the final declaration. Muslim countries were considering whether to walk out of the conference because, they said, the criticism of Israel was too weak.

Mary Robinson, the UN high commissioner for human rights and the secretary-general of the conference, had said Friday morning that the likely final declaration from the conference would be nothing to get "very excited about" because of the compromises that would be needed to reach consensus, reported the International Herald Tribune. "This is very difficult," Ms. Robinson said. "The great achievement will be to get an agreement at all." Koen Vervaeke, the EU delegation's spokesman, said that the Europeans strongly rejected a proposed passage that labeled slavery and colonialism "crimes against humanity." But, Mr. Vervaeke said,

"There was a breakthrough on the notion of an apology," especially when it was determined that the wording would protect member nations from possible lawsuits seeking reparations. When Mr. Vervaeke was asked if the accepted passage amounted to a European apology, he said, "Yes." Under the slavery deal, the conference acknowledged slavery and the slave trade as a crime against humanity and "should always have been so." It also expressed an apology in the form of acknowledgment for the wrongs of slavery and colonialism and offered a package of economic assistance to Africa.

World Bank says Indian boats exploit fishing ban

THE World Bank Monday expressed concern that trawlers from neighbouring India were poaching in Sri Lanka's embattled northern waters while the island's own people were denied fishing rights by the Sri Lankan government. The Bank's Sri Lanka director Mariana Todorova told reporters in Colombo Monday she counted eight Indian trawlers fishing in Sri Lankan waters off the islet of Delft during her visit to the region last month. "I met the (Sri Lankan) commanding officers and showed them the pictures (of Indian boats) and expressed my concern," Todorova was quoted by AFP as saying, adding locals should have the right to fish and earn a living. Fishermen have been

restricted in Sri Lanka's northeast to make it easier for security forces to spot boats of Liberation Tigers. However, the ban on local fishermen has opened the floodgates for hundreds of Indian vessels to enter the island's territorial waters and poach in rich prawn grounds, while devastating life for thousands of Tamil fishing families. Hundreds of Tamil and Indian fishermen have been killed at sea in attacks by the Sri Lankan navy and air force. Dozens of Indian fishermen have recently been captured by the Sri Lankan Navy. Sri Lankan fishermen have also been caught in Indian territorial waters. Editorial, page 6

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