

NEWS

Seeking any escape ...

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two days later, hiding him in the back of a van.

He presumes the camp guards knew what was happening. "The guards stopped us, but they didn't question (the driver) very much and they let us go," he says.

They were driven to another location, where they waited until the money was transferred into the required bank account.

But it would be another six weeks before he flew out of Colombo.

He lost 25kg during his ordeal, so much that airport officials were concerned he did not resemble his passport photo and it was arranged for Australian embassy officials to meet him in Bangkok to double-check his identity.

But Kumaran says there was no pleasure, or even relief, in setting foot in Sydney in early August. Instead he felt an overwhelming sense of guilt.

US urges probe ...

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backed paramilitaries "abducted and in some instances then killed Tamil civilians, particularly children and young men."

The report also said not enough food, medicine and clean water reached a no-fire zone and civilian camps even though the government had pledged to guarantee sufficient supplies there.

The report describes a hellish scene, in which a no-fire zone crowded with civilians was struck by sustained shelling and bombing.

One source in the no-fire zone estimated that 100 people a day were dying in Sri Lankan army shelling and bombing. Another source said hospital facilities in the area were continually struck by shells, even though their locations had been carefully reported to the government.

According to a report cited, a congested civilian area of the no-fire zone came under heavy shell attack, killing hundreds of civilians. The report also detailed allegations in which the LTTE took boys and girls to join their force and in which government forces broke a ceasefire. It used satellite imagery evidence as a tool to fill the information vacuum engineered as a result of the Sri Lankan government refusing to allow reporters and aid workers into the region.

The report cites footage of Sri Lankan forces executing nine bound and naked Tamils in January - which the government says was forged - and killings of young men rounded up in safe zones. The report mentioned that

"As soon as I was in the air leaving Colombo, it was a bad feeling. My heart is still there," he says, tears welling in his eyes.

"So many people made sacrifices, and yet still people are behind barbed wire, queuing to use the toilet and for food. They are not free. And I am here."

Perversely, however, Kumaran believes the turmoil of past year, including the defeat of LTTE, may bring an independent Tamil state closer to reality.

The Sri Lankan government's treatment of the IDPs demonstrates that the Sinhalese and Tamils cannot live peacefully side by side, he says.

"It will happen. I am confident still," Kumaran says.

"Maybe they have done us a favour. They have created a bigger problem by what they have done and it will force the world to act. And they have only strengthened Tamil nationalism. They have not killed it."

independent investigations into the footage are still to be carried out to establish its authenticity.

The report also gives prominence to the alleged execution of members of the LTTE political section while surrendering to the Sri Lanka military. The US embassy and other governments reported that Tamil political leaders were killed while surrendering, the report said.

"The United States recognizes a state's inherent right to defend itself from armed attacks, including those from non-state actors such as terrorist groups," the report said in its executive summary.

"The United States also expects states and non-state actors to comply with their international legal obligations," it added. "This report compiles alleged incidents that transpired in the final stages of the war, which may constitute violations of international humanitarian law or crimes against humanity and related harms," it said.

"The United States looks to the Government of Sri Lanka to identify an appropriate and credible mechanism and initiate a process for accountability," said the statement that accompanied the report.

Legal experts pointed out that under basic rules of international criminal law, the US has to give the Sri Lankan government the opportunity to investigate itself credibly, and that, further steps are warranted by the international community, if and when Sri Lanka fails or refuses to do so, reported TamilNet.

NEWS IN BRIEF

UK deportations 'under review'

A British court has called upon the authorities to consider accusations of human rights violations in Sri Lanka while reviewing deportation of failed asylum seekers to the island. High Court Judge Pelling, QC, has made the remarks after the British Home Office informed the court that the country's deportation policy is under review after the end of the conflict in Sri Lanka. The judge made the remark at Manchester High Court while delivering a judgment of an appeal by a Sri Lankan Tamil national, only known as Mr. B, against his continuous detention since 26 May 2006 by UK Border Agency (UKBA). Judge Pelling said: "First, at least one reason for the review must be not so much the end of hostilities itself but a concern about possible human rights abuses against the minority in the aftermath." A spokesman for recently formed Tamil Legal Advocacy Project (TLAP) hailed the Home Office decision despite coming under heavy pressure from UK right wing groups to deport illegal migrants. However, he criticized the British authorities for not making it public. (BBC Sinhala)

New avenues of US, Sri Lanka economy

Assistant United States Trade Representative for South and Central Asia, Michael Delaney, who led the U.S. delegation in the seventh council meeting of the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), a bilateral agreement reached between the USA and Sri Lanka in July 2002, has said that both the countries have now identified new areas of cooperation, adding that the purpose of the meeting was to "foster economic development and generate jobs, particularly in the war-affected areas." Sri Lankan Minister for Export Development and International Trade, G. L. Peiris, led the Sri Lankan delegation. "The seventh round of TIFA talks takes place at a historic juncture in the Sri Lankan economy. It is heartening to note that the TIFA process has already begun to expand beyond its traditional boundaries," said Peiris, according to a press statement issued by the U.S. Embassy in Colombo. Total two-way trade between Sri Lanka and the United States totaled \$2.3 billion in 2008, with U.S. imports of \$2 billion and U.S. exports of \$283 million, according to the statement. "The leading U.S. exports to Sri Lanka were aircraft, cereals, industrial machinery, electrical

machinery and plastics. U.S. imports from Sri Lanka are primarily apparel, rubber, precious stones and industrial machinery. In 2008, U.S. imports from Sri Lanka qualifying for GSP preferences were valued at \$153 million," the press statement said. (TamilNet)

India offered to help if IMF denied funds

India had offered to shore up Sri Lanka with a loan of \$2.6 billion to meet a balance of payments crisis if the IMF had not given the amount on political grounds, the Sri Lankan Home Minister, Dr Sarath Amunugama, told Parliament on Tuesday, October 20. He said that Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had even told the International Monetary Fund on one occasion, that India would supply that amount if it did not approve the standby credit facility for Sri Lanka. "The Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee had telephoned the Indian representatives of the IMF and instructed them to support Sri Lanka's case," the Sri Lankan Home Minister said. In his speech, the Indian representative had said that if human rights violations were a criterion for denying the standby facility, many of the member countries of the IMF would not qualify. The Sri Lankan government would never forget the assistance and backing of India and Pakistan during difficult times, Dr Amunugama told parliament. (Expressbuzz.com)

Libya, Sri Lanka share experiences

Sri Lanka has stepped up efforts to strengthen bi-lateral relations with Libya, with a visit to the Libyan capital by Sri Lankan Minister of Agricultural Development, Maithripala Sirisena. The discussions centred around increasing co-operation especially in the areas of economy, trade and investment, said a press release after the visit on October 18. The meeting followed soon after a Sri Lankan firm won the right to build 2,500 houses in the African country over a two year time period. The Sri Lanka State Engineering Corporation was granted the mega housing construction project in Libya worth US\$495 million. This recent economic cooperation is seen as furthering Sri Lanka's policy of attempting to move away from Western businesses and towards Asia and Africa. In April this year Libya pledged US\$500 million as a financial co-operation package for development projects in Sri Lanka. These are intended to take place across the country in

many different industries. Other countries that have recently extended financial help to Sri Lanka included Burma, which donated US\$50,000 to the Sri Lankan government and Iran, which not only granted \$450million for a hydropower project, but also provided for Sri Lanka's entire crude oil requirement via a seven month credit facility.

Tamils arrested at Katunayake

Thirty-one Tamil youths were taken into custody by the State Intelligence Unit of the Sri Lanka Police at Katunayake International Airport in four separate incidents. The arrested youths are now detained in the Katunayake Police and are being interrogated. In the first incident on October 15, eleven Tamil youths took a flight to Singapore, but were refused permission to enter and returned to Colombo, where they were taken into custody. In the second incident that took place on Friday, October 16, eighteen Tamil students were arrested by the State Intelligence Unit personnel when they arrived in Katunayake International Airport to take a flight to London, despite having valid student visas issued by the UK embassy. Separately Thuraishamy Sureshkumar, of Araly North of Jaffna district was arrested on October 10, and Thangarajah Nishanthan, of Karuveppankulam, Vavuniya, was arrested on October 20, as they were waiting at the Katunayake Airport to go abroad for employment. They both had valid travel documents. (TamilNet)

Detained for 15 years in Welikada

A team from a human rights organization called Peoples Forum for Independence that visited the Welikada prison made a startling disclosure that they found a Tamil youth who was arrested at the age of fourteen has been under detention for fifteen years under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Now the youth is 29 years old. He is among several Tamil political prisoners who have been detained under the PTA and Emergency Regulations without any inquiry and without recourse in courts, said an official of the organization to the Colombo media. The team visited Welikada prison and talked to several Tamil political prisoners including senior journalist Mr. Tissanayagam who was sentenced to jail for twenty years. The team came to know the particular Tamil youth during that visit. (TamilNet)