

## NEWS



Despite the intimidating presence of Sri Lanka intelligence personnel, thousands of people poured in from all parts of the Jaffna peninsula to pay their last respects to the remains of late Thiruvengadam Vellupillai, father of LTTE leader Mr. V. Pirapaharan, at Theeruvil in Valveddiththurai. On January 10 the body was taken from Theeruvil to the house in which LTTE leader Pirapaharan was born and from there to the cremation ground in procession. Thousands of people from all parts of the peninsula joined in the procession while black flags were flown and sombre music was played, despite the intimidating presence of a large number of Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers and policemen. Mr. Vellupillai passed away at the age of 86 while being held in isolation under the illegal custody of the SLA. His wife, ailing, 80 year old Vallipuram Parvathy, was released from SLA custody after the death of her husband participated in the funeral rites. The LTTE leader's parents had been living in Tamil Nadu in India, but opted to return to Vanni before the final phase of the war broke out.

## 27,000 SLA soldiers died in war claims Gotabaya Rajapaksa

Daily Mirror

SRI LANKA'S Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa has warned that several foreign and local bodies including a section of the international community have become a part of a malicious attempt against Sri Lanka.

The government information department quoted the Defence Secretary as saying the forthcoming Presidential Elections will mark a decisive juncture in the

nation's history and will determine the country's survival or destruction.

"We have been able to defeat the most ruthless terrorist organization and bring peace to the nation after three decades," he said.

"This historic victory was achieved by sacrificing the lives of 27,000 heroic soldiers who fought against terrorism," he said.

He added that the evil forces that obstructed the mission to liberate the nation are again engaged

in a malicious effort to turn back the victory the country achieved.

"The ugly head of evil political forces that opposed the fight against terrorism is rising again. Several foreign and local bodies including a section of the international community have become a part of this malicious attempt," he noted.

"It is the due responsibility of all the patriotic forces of this country to be aware of these treacherous acts and rally round to defeat these forces," he said.

## Alston calls for wider probe ...

continued from p2

a crusade of his own to force a war crime inquiry against Sri Lanka."

Mr Samarasinghe said the government's own investigation into the footage revealed that it was riddled with "discrepancies and shortcomings".

The video was provided to media organisations by a group called Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka, which said it showed "the reality of the behaviour of the government forces

during the war". Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka said the video had been taken in January 2009 using a mobile phone.

In a separate development, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has informed the Sri Lankan Government that he is considering the appointment of a Commission of Experts to advise him further and to assist the Government in taking measures to address possible violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Mr. Ban's spokesperson,

Martin Nesirky, told reporters that the UN is in regular contact with the Government regarding the implementation of the joint statement issued in May at the conclusion of the Secretary-General's visit to Sri Lanka.

In that statement, Mr. Ban had underlined the importance of a comprehensive accountability process for addressing violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, and the Government undertook to take measures to address grievances of the victims of the conflict.

## Little faith in delivery ...

continued from p13

"These groups are trying to make way for another Eelam struggle in this country", Rajapaksa told the gathering on the occasion.

Copies of the manifesto were first presented to the Maha Sangha and all religious dignitaries present on the occasion.

A few days earlier, Fonseka launched his common minimum programme, titled "Vishvasaneyya Venasak" (Believable Change), setting out 10 points he will accomplish if he is elected.

Presenting his plan Fonseka told reporters he is not a politician but a government servant by profession and does not belong to any party but is a Sri Lankan who is acceptable to all.

In his programme, Fonseka pledged to maintain cordial and friendly ties with all countries world over and requested for an opportunity to be granted to establish democracy, wipe out corruption, and ease the burden the people are faced with.

"Life is harder under the Rajapaksas. Corruption, bribery, nepotism and ego-boosting extravagance are holding back the development of our country and hurting families," Fonseka told reporters at the launch of his manifesto.

In keeping with a Sri Lankan election tradition of populist subsidies, he promised higher public sector salaries and welfare payments, both of which are supported by one of his backers, the Marxist Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party, but contradictory to the open market policies including privatisation and reduction in government expenses of another one his backers, the main opposition, United National Party.

Similarly, JVP and the Tamil National Alliance which announced its decision to back Fonseka have opposing views on the Tamil national question.

Political Analysts say whilst Fonseka may have not taken openly Sinhala nationalistic position, by trying to be everything to everyone, he may turn out to be nothing to anyone.

## World Bank funds NE reconstruction

SRI Lanka is to receive more funding from the World Bank to help restore war-torn areas, after it had already been approved a \$250 million loan.

Country director Naoko Ishii told reporters that "our funding for north east re-construction will increase to 50 percent of the total in 2010 from 30 percent in 2009.

From September 2009, three programs totalling \$182 million and another program worth \$77 million have been granted for Sri Lanka. "We have another four programs which will go for board approval when negotiations are complete," continued Ishii. "The challenges of reconciliation and reconstruction are daunting."

The loan packages have been part of projects "designed to support the return of 100,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to their places of origin in the Northern Province and to restore their livelihoods destroyed by three decades of civil war."

Funds have also been provided to "restore village-level infrastructure and war-damaged rural access roads, drinking water, irrigation facilities, and public office buildings."

\$12 million has also been loaned for "the ongoing community-based Reawakening Project ...for the most vulnerable returning IDPs, including women-head-

ed households, youth and ex-combatants, as well as disabled and landless people."

Tamil analysts have commented that given the Sri Lankan government's long history of unaccountability and lack of transparency, it will be difficult to ensure that all the money is used properly. They point to the allegation that incumbent President Rajapakse was found to have funds from the "Helping Hambantota" tsunami charity in his personal bank account.

They also said that it is essential that the funds are sent to the correct areas of the country, namely the war torn Northeast, which is in desperate need of reconstruction.

After the devastating tsunami of 2004, the Northeast of the island, traditional Tamil areas, were badly neglected by the Sri Lankan government, with some areas still awaiting aid, according to press reports. Meanwhile, in President Rajapakse's hometown of Hambantota, reconstruction began within weeks, and more houses were constructed than there were before the tsunami.

The government has been slammed by local and international observers in for its lack of accountability and transparency in matters relating from war crimes to bribery and corruption.