



SCOPP

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APRC REPORT - A HISTORIC STEP TOWARDS PEACE WITH DIGNITY

GOVT. ALWAYS FOR PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

EAST SURGES AHEAD UNDER NEW VISION



Hopes for peace and prosperity

President Mahinda Rajapaksa's Thaipongal Message



Sri Lanka's Hindus join their fellow religionists the world over, today, to celebrate Thaipongal, the most popular of the Hindu festivals of Sri Lanka, President Mahinda Rajapaksa said in a Thaipongal message.

He said: "Their celebrations will continue the traditions and rituals of the Pongal, which falls on the first day of the month of Thai.

This twice hallowed event is a festival of the Sun - the harbinger of good harvests, and a harvest festival celebrated after the farmers have reaped the rewards of hard work in the field.

In observing the traditions of Thaipongal, the Hindus of Sri Lanka will show their commitment to protecting a rich cultural heritage, and in keeping with the spirit of revival and rededication that is part of this festival, they will also look to the future with hope and optimism, shared by all people of our country.

I wish the Hindus of Sri Lanka a happy Thaipongal and join them in their hopes for peace, prosperity, and greater trust and understanding in the coming year."

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Cover Picture

Hon. (Prof.) Tissa Vitarana, Minister for Science and Technology, and Chairman of the APRC, is handing over the first APRC Report to HE President Mahinda Rajapakse at the Presidential Secretariat on January 23, 2008.



A Historic Step Towards Peace with Dignity for all Sri Lankans - APRC unified in its first report

Unity through discussion was apparent in the first report of the All Party Representatives Committee (APRC) which was presented to H.E. the President on January 23rd 2008. The report, entitled '*Action to be taken by the President to fully implement relevant provisions of the present constitution as a prelude to the APRC proposals*', was signed by representatives of all but one of the 14 parties that constitute the APRC.

Though at its initial meeting there was such a wide divergence of views that the Chairman feared this might be its last, after lengthy negotiations in which various viewpoints were put forward, and listened to with respect, the APRC has achieved a level of consensus not seen before in political discussion.

The fourteenth member, the representative of the Western Peoples Front has confirmed the party will remain in the APRC and participate in the final stages of the deliberations which will lead to the proposals for the long term.

The possibility of achieving the goal of a political solution to the national question has never looked more promising. The Indian Government has welcomed the report as the first stage in this process.

The President in accepting to fully implement the relevant provisions of the Thirteenth Amendment and in presenting the APRC document to the cabinet requested full cooperation to implement it urgently. This makes clear the current political will, missing in successive governments since 1987, to make a success of the 13th amendment which should, had it not been for the initial intransigence of the LTTE, laid the foundation for settling the problems that had arisen.

The APRC and its chairman have to be commended for actively seeking, within a united country, ways of meeting the aspirations of the Tamil speaking people, in particular in the North and East of the country. These people suffered worst from the failure to take

their interests into account in national decision making, though it is also true that people in all areas outside decision making centers did not have their interests adequately considered in many instances. Stress laid in the report on satisfactory implementation of constitutional provisions regarding language rights indicates the importance of ensuring that all citizens feel they are adequately empowered in the context of a united country.

APRC members were unanimous in opting to continue their deliberations soon after they presented their first report to the President on the 23rd of January 2008. They met on the 28th of January for the sixty fourth meeting and pledged to work together in the same spirit of cooperation and to continue with the process of confidence building which had enabled them to overcome mutual distrust and reach consensus on many issues under discussion.

The mandate given by the President to the APRC on 11 July 2006 was to '*fashion creative options that satisfy the minimum expectations ... as well as provide a comprehensive approach to the resolution of the national question*'. The All Party Representative Committee on Constitutional Reforms (APRC) as it is formally called, is made up of nominees of parties represented in Parliament. Initially it had the services of a Panel of Experts.

The Panel of Experts presented preliminary reports to the APRC on 6 December 2006 and the Chairman of the APRC presented a discussion paper to the APRC members on 8 January 2007, taking into consideration the views expressed by members during the APRC deliberations and also views expressed by the Expert Panel in preliminary reports. The main opposition party, the UNP, had initially refused to participate but it later joined the proceedings and presented its views to the APRC on 8

January 2007. The main government party, the SLFP, submitted its views to the APRC on 25 May 2007.

The largest Tamil party, the TNA, was initially not invited since it was assumed that APRC reports would later form the substance of discussions with the LTTE, with which the TNA was identified. When it became clear however that the LTTE was not likely to resume discussions, the TNA was also asked for its views. All other Tamil and Muslim parties have continued to participate in the APRC, with the one member Western People's Front withdrawing for a brief period but subsequently returning to talks. The JVP, the second largest group in opposition, initially participated in the APRC but subsequently withdrew. The UNP withdrew after a section of the UNP broke away and joined the government. Though its place was kept for several months, when the UNP refused to rejoin the APRC, the breakaway group was admitted, and participated in the final discussions and signed the report.

Amongst the elements laid down by the President in summoning the APRC were

- The need for a multi-party effort and an inclusive approach
- The need to ensure democratic values, political pluralism, human rights and rule of law.

He also noted that '*Improving the lives of Sri Lankans all over the country is our ambition. Improving the lives of the impoverished in the North and the East is a priority.*'

The proposals presented by the APRC on January 23rd represent a huge step in that direction, and it is hoped that the principles enunciated therein will find support from all parts of the country.

Full details of the APRC proposals can be accessed by visiting the following webpage:

http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca200801/20080124aprc_proposals.htm



Secretary General's Message



The Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process launches a new version of its newsletter at a time of significant political changes. When the Ceasefire Agreement was abrogated, the negative view was that this was the end of the Peace Process. But, as the initial proposals of the APRC made clear, what has emerged is a

fresh impetus to providing a political solution for the political problems this country faces.

Naturally there will be those who assert that the current proposals are inadequate. They do not register that this is not intended to be the end of the peace process, rather it is a start to ensuring greater empowerment for all our citizens. How more devolution can be a bad thing for those who want devolution is inexplicable, except on the argument that only through intransigence can all demands be achieved.

But such negative approaches are inappropriate for the peace process. At SCOPP we need to build on whatever foundations are available, recognizing that they are the stronger for their clear constitutionality. At the same time we recognize that much more needs to be done to restore confidence in the peace process. That is why this newsletter will also deal with humanitarian assistance to areas that need it, and with measures to improve security and human rights for all.

Progress in these areas will not be easy, but with concerted effort, and sympathetic understanding of both necessities and constraints, we might get further than in the days when the peace process was confined to waiting for negotiations with a partner who refused to talk. The initial recommendations of the APRC, on the contrary, testify to the synergy that develops when people with different approaches agree to negotiate in a spirit of mutual respect.

Rajiva Wijesinha
Secretary General

The APRC, Power Sharing and the 13th Amendment

By

Prof. Rajiva Wijesinha
Secretary General
Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process

The Peace Secretariat is surprised at the barrage of criticism directed recently at attempts to initiate a political solution to the country's current problems through the All Party Representative Committee. This Committee has met nearly sixty times over the last eighteen months and has done yeoman service in attempting to achieve consensus amongst a range of political parties with very different ideas. It is a tribute to its Chairman, Prof Tissa Vitharna, and the participants, that they have agreed on many factors. Some others need to be settled, but all indications are that this will be done soon.

However, the APRC does not include all parties, and therefore implementation of its proposals may take some time. Both the UNP and the JVP have withdrawn from the APRC and, if any proposals require a two thirds majority of parliament, the support of at least one of these parties will be necessary. Whilst it is hoped that some support

will be available, the lessons of history cannot be ignored. In both her first term and her second, President Kumaratunga thought she would get the support of the UNP for far-reaching constitutional reforms, but this was not forthcoming.

Whilst there may have been good reason for this, the action of several UNP members, in burning the proposals on the floor of the house on the grounds that they conceded too much to Tamils, speaks volumes for the breadth and quality of the opposition that may face any proposals put forward by the APRC. The opposition of the UNP even to President Kumaratunga's P-Toms agreement, now forgotten by those who blame only the JVP – which resorted to a legal remedy rather than insidious insinuation – confirms that the government would be unwise to put all its eggs into the basket of possible UNP support for constitutional changes.



This does not mean the government should not try, to institute such reforms as seem desirable. But it should also activate contingency measures to improve the situation regardless of the fate of major reform proposals. This is what last week's discussions were about, and it is sad that many commentators have sought to denigrate these efforts instead of looking at what is positive about them.

In short, the government plans to work in accordance with the simplest principles of problem solving, that any student of critical thinking has imbibed. Regrettably critical thinking was not taught before the nineties in Sri Lanka, so many commentators are not aware that, when you have a big problem, it makes sense to divide it into small problems and solve each of them as possible. Again, one needs to proceed from what one knows, arranged systematically, to deduce what one does not know; one proceeds from what is given, ordering it carefully, to derive what-ever more seems desirable.

Hence the sensible suggestion that the 13th amendment, which is now law in this country, should be activated in full. This was not done, for a variety of reasons which should be analysed at length, though this is not the appropriate place to do this. Suffice it to say that, because of unwillingness on the part of many Provincial Councils to take initiatives, accompanied by the natural unwillingness of central government ministers to yield their prerogatives, very little that could have been accomplished for the benefit of the people of the provinces was achieved. At the

same time the signal achievement of perhaps the only Provincial Council Chief Minister who had far-reaching plans he implemented systematically – namely Jayawickrema Perera of the Northwestern Province who created what might be termed the brand Wayamba – indicates what can be done with concerted effort.

There are several areas in which thorough implementation of the 13th amendment will suffice to empower people in areas in which they have previously been deprived. There are others in which appropriate regulations can be brought, under what is termed the concurrent list, with only a simple majority of parliament required for ratification, to increase regional powers and ensure that these will not be trespassed upon by the centre. Not only in areas such as Health and Education, where centralized decision making is obviously inappropriate, but even in fields such as Policing and Justice, the 13th amendment conferred powers that have not been implemented.

What is the problem about implementing these? The fear perhaps is that, after implementing these, the government will decide that nothing more need be done. That fear is understandable, given what happened in the past, but this is where the APRC would also have put further proposals on the table for consideration, proposals which it will not then be possible to ignore. The point is, if those further proposals cannot be implemented, immediately or even later, it is ridiculous to prevent some good being done on the grounds that better might just conceivably be possible.

Government withdraws from CFA

The Cabinet on January 02 unanimously decided to withdraw from the Norwegian arranged Ceasefire Agreement entered with the LTTE in 2002.

The Cabinet approved the Cabinet memorandum submitted by Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanyaka at the Cabinet meeting.

The Government took this decision taking into account the number of Ceasefire violations by the LTTE.

According to the Agreement, either party should give two weeks notification prior to the withdrawal from the Ceasefire to the Norwegian facilitators. With the government's decision the Norwegian-led Nordic monitoring mission would end its assignment here. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) suspended naval monitoring in May 2006 after Sea Tigers targeted a Sri Lanka Navy convoy off Mullaitivu carrying two naval monitors.

The Ceasefire came into effect on February 22, 2002 with then Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe signing the Ceasefire Agreement to pursue a peaceful solution to the North East problem. Velupillai Prabhakaran signed the agreement on behalf of the LTTE.

The LTTE unilaterally quit the peace process in April 2003.

The six rounds of peace were held from September 2002 to March 2003 three times in Thailand and the other three rounds in Norway, Germany and Japan.

The two rounds of talks held in Geneva during President Rajapaksa's administration, collapsed with the LTTE withdrawing from talks for no apparent reason.



PM says Govt always for peace negotiations



Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickrematunge told Parliament that the Government is always committed to conduct peace negotiations to restore peace.

He said the LTTE is not the one and only representative of the Tamil people. **"Therefore, we are willing to go for discussions as a responsible Government with any organisation and party if they are very keen on solving the problems of Tamils. He said the LTTE still has an opportunity to join the peace negotiations."**

The Premier said that the New Year dawned with hopes for a prosperous and peaceful country.

"Within a few hours after the new year dawned, UNP MP T. Maheshwaran was killed inside an Hindu Kovil in Kotahena. We condemn this assassination. An Army bus was targeted and exploded by the LTTE on January 2. Many innocent lives were lost.

It is a horrendous crime." The Prime Minister said Nation Building Minister D.M. Dassanayake was injured in the claymore attack in Wattala. He later died. It is very unfortunate. He said: "This blood thirsty LTTE's major objective was to create panic among the public. They want to create a barbaric culture. They attack even sacred places.

Developing the country is a very difficult task with terrorism. Therefore we are committed to eliminate terrorism."

"We have been able to achieve a number of military goals by defeating terrorism last year. The Armed Forces have been able to claim the lives of a number of top terrorists last year.

We have been able to find huge amount of

weapons. The Security Forces have been able to find 1,350 bombs in Batticaloa. The Armed Forces have also taken over the terrorist camp in Vavuniya.

We have destroyed the sea-Tiger Camp in Mullaithivu. The terrorists are now isolated and engaged in terrorist activity in Batticaloa, Mannar and Vavuniya. The LTTE kidnap and kill innocent civilians.

The civilians are threatened due to the barbaric attacks of the LTTE. It has reported that 60 Armed Forces and Police Personnel have died during last month while 578 have been injured 47 civilians have been killed and 36 injured. It is our duty to support the Security Forces to eliminate terrorism.

We should encourage our Armed Forces. We are committed to eliminate terrorism which has been plagued the country for past few decades. To maintain law, peace and order in the country we expect your support to extend the Emergency Regulations for another one month.

"The elimination of terrorism from the country is very close. We are in the process of eradicating terrorism. The LTTE tries to mislead the whole world now.

They have taken a number of benefits by taking cover under the CFA. "That is why the Government decided to abrogate the CFA. They have violated the CFA thousands of times. Why should we maintain such a document ? We have been able to silence a number of LTTE leaders.

Our Armed Forces have been strengthened to eradicate terrorism. The Air Force attacked successfully after identifying correct targets.

It has destroyed a number of LTTE bunkers. We take correct information from our intelligence services."



Statement by Hon. Rohitha Bogollagama, Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the Ministry on 4 January 2008



The Government of Sri Lanka yesterday (3rd January 2008) formally notified the Royal Norwegian Government of its decision to terminate the Agreement on a "Ceasefire (CFA) between the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam" concluded on 22nd February

2002. This notification was in terms of Article 4:4 of this Agreement and will take effect 14 days from the date of this notice i.e. 16th January 2008.

Accordingly, the Status of Mission Agreement (SOMA) on the Establishment and the Management of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) dated 18th March 2002 between the Royal Norwegian Government and the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka will also stand terminated with effect from 16th January 2008.

The decision of the Government to terminate the Ceasefire Agreement has been taken after very careful consideration of all relevant facts.

Firstly, it must be underlined that this Agreement with the LTTE was seriously flawed from the very inception. It was entered into without proper consultation by the Government of the day, with even the Cabinet of Ministers not being privy to its contents. Legitimate concerns of the security forces had not even been taken into account. It had the effect of alienating the democratic Tamil political forces and focussed solely on the LTTE. However, notwithstanding these shortcomings evidently made in the hope that sustainable peace could be achieved, at no stage in its six rounds of talks from Sept 2002- March 2003 with the then Government did the LTTE seek to engage in any substantive political discussion aimed at moving towards a political settlement.

On the contrary, under the cover of the CFA, the LTTE continued to take strategic advantage on the ground as they had in all previous peace processes, seeking to dominate areas such as Sampur, as well as continuing to smuggle in large hauls of lethal arms, explosives and ammunition. It must be noted that it is during this period that the LTTE most brazenly assassinated among others, the serving Foreign Minister, moderate Tamil Member of Parliament, Lakshman Kadirgamar on 12th August 2005 and eliminated many of Sri Lanka's intelligence officers through attacks including in Kiribathgoda, Dehiwala, Bambalapitiya and Jaffna.

Secondly, despite the LTTE launching a wave of attacks against the security forces only 14 days after the assumption of office by President Mahinda Rajapaksa in November 2005, every effort was made by the new Government to engage in political negotiations with the LTTE, which had unilaterally pulled out of the peace process since April 2003. This included two rounds of talks held in Geneva and technical talks scheduled in Oslo. Infact, in Oslo, the LTTE delegation having arrived in the city, refused to show-up for negotiations, once again underlying its lack of commitment to the Peace Process. The LTTE spurned all opportunities at discussing the core issues aimed at arriving at a political settlement, and continued its duplicitous action of escalating the violations of the CFA. Notwithstanding LTTE attacks on the Army Commander,

Secretary Defence and the assassination of Major General Parami Kulatunge, the third highest ranking officer in the Sri Lanka Army, the Deputy Secretary General of the Government Peace Secretariat Ketheshwaran Loganathan in August 2006 and numerous attacks targeting innocent civilians including bus bombings in Kebitigollawa, Nittambuwa, Seenigama and Chedikulum, the Government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa remained steadfast in its efforts to seek an honourable peace with the LTTE, even as it pursued negotiations on a political settlement with all political parties represented in the Parliament through the APRC process. It should be noted that it was only following the LTTE blocking of water supply to the East at the Mavilaru anicut, that the Government was compelled to undertake military operations against the LTTE in order to protect the civilian population and vital strategic assets including the Trincomalee Port.

Thirdly, it must be noted that throughout the period of the CFA, protestations by GOSL to the Norwegian Government as well as to the SLMM, about the increased illegal activities of the LTTE under the cloak of the CFA including development of its air wing and unabated child recruitment by the LTTE amounting to 1743 cases as ruled by the SLMM as at 30 April 2007, were to go unheeded. In addition to the LTTE's thousands of ceasefire violations already committed, by its stepping up of deliberate and indiscriminate targeting of civilians including women and children in recent weeks including bomb blasts in Nugegoda, Kebitigollawa, Slave Island as well as the killing of UNP Parliamentarian T. Maheswaran on the first day of the New Year and the failed assassination attempt using a paraplegic female suicide cadre on Social Services and Social Welfare Minister Douglas Devananda last month, it becomes ominous that the LTTE seeks to continue to engage in provocative activities that could create unrest in the South, making a mockery of the CFA.

In the meantime, I wish to underline that the termination of the CFA does not in anyway hamper the process of moving towards a negotiated political settlement. In fact, it gives us broader space to pursue this goal in a manner that involves all sections of the Sri Lankan polity, which remained sidelined due to the CFA, an agreement solely between the Government and the LTTE. As stated by His Excellency the President Mahinda Rajapaksa on 26 December 2007 in Matara, the doors remain open for the LTTE to join this process. It should be recalled that the Thimpu Talks of 1985, the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987, the 1990 talks between President Premadasa and the LTTE, as well as talks between President Kumaratunga's administration and the LTTE in 1994, were not done with the presence of a CFA.

The Government of Sri Lanka will, while dealing militarily to eliminate the scourge of terrorism from our land, will spare no effort in our bid to arrive at a practical and sustainable political settlement. In doing so, our Government is conscious that the 13th Amendment to the Constitution signed following the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987 itself, is yet to be fully implemented.

The Government is appreciative of the Norwegian facilitators and the SLMM as well as the role played by the co-chairs in their efforts to assist the peace process in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka while reiterating its sincere commitment to a negotiated political settlement through an inclusive process which includes all minority groups of Sri Lanka, will look forward to the support of the International Community, as we work towards securing a sustainable peace.



SCOPP Hosts Farewell for Outgoing SLMM

SCOPP Chief praises peace monitors for good job under difficult conditions

Professor Rajiva Wijesinha, Secretary General of the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process, today praised the Sri Lanka Monitor Mission (SLMM) for doing a good job on the whole in monitoring adherence to the Ceasefire Agreement under difficult conditions.



He made the remarks at a farewell luncheon for members of the SLMM hosted by the Peace Secretariat.

"There were many ups and downs in the monitoring of the Ceasefire Agreement but despite these the SLMM in general carried out its task well," the Secretary General said in his luncheon remarks. "The members of the SLMM team did an exemplary job often risking their lives because of their exposure to hostile actions of the LTTE," he said.

Retired Maj. Gen. Lars Solvberg, Head of the SLMM in Sri Lanka, said the group's experience in Sri Lanka had been enriching and said SLMM members hoped to maintain ties to the Peace Secretariat and Sri Lanka. Gen. Solvberg said upon his return to Norway he intended to prepare a report on SLMM's work experience in Sri Lanka and on the lessons learned relating to the monitoring process.

SLMM is shutting down its operation after nearly six years in Sri Lanka following abrogation of the agreement by the Government of Sri Lanka.

The Secretary General expressed special appreciation for the service of Per Sander Skarvik, head of SLMM's offices in the Eastern Region. In 2003, Mr. Skarvik detected arms aboard an LTTE vessel which had been intercepted by the Sri Lankan Navy. The peace monitor had to jump overboard to save his life when the LTTE blew up the ship on detection of its lethal cargo.

The Secretary General also expressed his gratitude for SLMM's efforts to establish a close working relationship with local monitors in the six districts and hoped that the close relationship will continue in the future.

At a later farewell reception given by the Norwegian Ambassador Tore Hattrem, the SCOPP Chief expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to meet the local staff of the SLMM and reiterated his appreciation of the work of the current Head of Mission. It is hoped that, if SCOPP receives a report on the entire operation from the SLMM, it will be able to build on the experience to develop mechanisms for restoring confidence between all communities in advancing the peace process. Following an appreciation of the work of the SLMM by the Ambassador, The SCOPP Chief reiterated Sri Lanka's gratitude to the monitors who had been under much pressure at times.

Particular mention was made of Mr. Bleymann, who had been fired on by the LTTE while performing his duties as a naval monitor in 2006. Despite the difficulties of the period, the SLMM under its current head had done much to restore confidence and SCOPP appreciated its cooperation over the preceding year.



Advancing Human Rights in Geneva: Report on Activities of the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process



Two representatives of the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process formed part of the Sri Lankan delegation to the Sixth Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. Prof Rajiva Wijesinha, Secretary General, and Shi-

rani Goonatilleke, Legal Director, along with Shavindra Fernando, Deputy Solicitor General, and G K D Amarawardena, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights, joined staff of the Mission in Geneva to contribute to the proceedings. Permanent Representative Dayan Jayatilleke is a Vice-President of the Council, and the experienced staff in the Mission contributed actively to discussions, both formal and informal, on a range of issues. The highly professional IT division of the Mission worked right round the clock to keep the media and other Missions briefed, while monitoring all news on Sri Lanka for the benefit of the delegation.

Preceding the sessions, the Minister for Disaster Management and Human Rights, Hon Mahinda Samarasinghe, had briefed delegates of several countries on the current Sri Lankan situation, and this was followed on the first day of the sessions by further briefing meetings for various ambassadors. The delegation indicated the areas in which assistance was required by Sri Lanka to improve the Human Rights situation, and during the course of the sessions representations were made to countries that had advanced some criticism but had failed to respond to requests for assistance. A brief discussion with Special Rapporteur Philip Alston confirmed that he had recommended action in areas also identified by the Committee convened by SCOPP. This was a Sub-Committee to look into improving Human Rights Training for the police, appointed by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights, with the participation of representatives of the Inspector General of Police and the National Police Commission.

Discussion with the former Special Human Rights Adviser of the UNHC for Human Rights revealed why, contrary to the expectations of the National Human Rights Commission, there were no UN Volunteers in place in the regional offices of the HRC as agreed previously. It transpired that donors had been unwilling to contribute. This seemed a clear example of a self-fulfilling prophecy, inasmuch as many complaints are heard about the national HRC, but it would seem that the complainants are unwilling to strengthen its operations. Whatever the reasons, it was a pity that the SHRA had not shared this information with the HRC so that matters might have been adjusted promptly.

In the course of debate the delegation was also able to draw attention to misleading information that was circulated.

The representative of the Netherlands declared to the Assembly that the International Eminent Persons Group had resigned, and averred that he had been briefed to this effect, but the delegation was able to show by reading from the IIEGP letter that this was not the case, and that the IIEGP had simply declared – for reasons cited – that they would not continue beyond their mandate beyond the end of March next year. While the delegation did not question how the representative of the Netherlands had been briefed on a matter that was not as yet in the public domain, he was advised that perhaps a less personal perspective would be conducive to promoting human rights requirements as opposed to other agendas.

The delegation also took the opportunity to visit the headquarters of agencies that work in Sri Lanka, such as the ICRC, IFRC and OCHA, to discuss ways of ensuring the most effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, and reporting on problems in a manner that could not be exploited for political purposes. Apologies were tendered for errors that had crept into reporting, whilst investigations into misleading information that may have originated from within the system were promised. Attention was drawn in particular to a release by the UNHCR office in Geneva that did not seem to have been cleared with the representative in Colombo, whilst the failure to note the efforts made by the Sri Lankan government to ensure not only humanitarian assistance but regular social services to all citizens of the country was highlighted, so that remedial action could be taken.

It was also noted that the oft repeated criticism that international agencies had to take special care about humanitarian workers in Sri Lanka was a canard that needed to be dealt with. It was pointed out that international workers were not under threat at all, and that it was Sri Lankans who had suffered most, and most conspicuously because of culpable negligence. Whereas statistics for 2007 were comparatively low, there had been a horrendous incident in 2006, which was being investigated. However, as it had been pointed out to Sir John Holmes, who had kindly shared the regulations with regard to safety, it was obvious that those regulations had been breached. It was pointed out that it was incumbent on his office to ensure that that breach was also inquired into, given his concerns in this regard. This was noted, though it was also suggested that the matter should also be brought to the attention of the UN Coordinator in Colombo.

A visit was also paid to the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in view of the forthcoming visit of a delegation of the IPU, invited by the government of Sri Lanka to look into concerns expressed by some opposition politicians. The visits confirmed the willingness of these institutions to work together with the government of Sri Lanka to promote human rights and humanitarian assistance to peoples suffering from the impact of terrorism, a subject that had been discussed at length during the sessions of the Council.



ICCT Concludes Recognizing Greater Cooperation at Both the Bilateral and Multilateral Levels

The International Conference on Countering Terrorism concluded on Saturday (20/10) recognizing the increasing challenge posed to democratic states by terrorist groups, and the need for greater cooperation at both the bilateral and multilateral levels in facing up to this challenge. The Conference, attended by terrorism experts including academia and media from 23 countries, pledged to continue to function as a network in furthering the struggle against terrorism.



In comments, concluding the sessions of the Conference, which involved all the principal speakers, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Palitha Kohona, said "Terrorism has affected many countries of the democratic world, and we share the pain and the determination to deal with this problem resolutely." He pointed out that "it was evident from the discussion which occurred over the last two days that Sri Lanka has taken a firm position with regard to terrorism consistent with the attitudes of other countries which have suffered from terrorism."

Noting that, "when a sovereign state is challenged by the brutal terrorist organizations there is no choice but to face it," adding that "It is our duty to deal with it now and resolve it today. There was no reason to leave this problem for yet another generation to suffer."

The need to develop strategic doctrine for countering terrorism beyond mere action at the operational level, was also highlighted by the participants from countries, who had faced similar situations. It was also suggested that a Re-

gional Counter Terrorism Centre be established to monitor and share experiences among countries.

The session on the Socio economic costs of terrorism, which was chaired by Professor of Economics of the University of Colombo, Prof. W. D. Lakshman, had as its Principal Speaker, Executive Director of the Institute of Policy Studies, Dr. Saman Kelegama who examined the costs of terrorism from a multi-dimensional perspective, focused on the economic output loss, the damage and destruction to the physical and social infrastructure as well as the human cost of war in terms of deaths and displacement. Dr. Kelegama summarized his comments by saying that a sovereign state had no choice but to confront terrorism despite the costs.

The Discussants joining the session included the former Director of the Department of Statistics of the Central Bank, Dr. Anila Bandaranaike as well as the Principal Researcher of the Point Pedro Institute of Development, Dr. Muthukrishna Sarvananthan.

Assistant Professor of the Nanyang Technological University of Singapore, Mr. Shyam Tekwani was the Principal Speaker at the session on terrorism and the role of the media and civil society which was presided over by the Chairman of the Marga Institute, Mr. Mangala Moonesinghe, and which included the Director of the Sri Lanka College of Journalism, Mr. Arjuna Ranawana and Dr. Hiranthi Wijemanne, formerly of UNICEF.

Identifying key areas in which the media needed to play a more proactive role, Mr. Tekwani examined the implications of "an independent media, and whether it needed to be an irresponsible one." Noting that "terrorism is not an ideology, but a methodology" Mr. Tekwani observed that terrorism is "not an objective, but a method of achieving an objective." He also pointed out that terrorism is a means of communication, with more focus after 9/11 as a means to get to wider society. He commended the manner in which, in recent times, the Sri Lankan Government was seeking to engage the media proactively.

The final thematic session of the Conference was on "Transforming 'terrorists': Lessons from Sri Lanka," with the leader of the Tamil United Liberation Front, V. Anandasangaree as the Principal Speaker emphasized that 'the problem of transforming terrorists is a multi-faceted, complicating and peculiar to Sri Lanka,' and noting that "terrorism is not merely a challenge to democratically elected Governments; it is also a greater challenge for electing Democratic Governments." Mr. Anandasangaree was of the view that "the LTTE is such a ruthless organization with unyielding character, will never agree for a solution other than separation," and also pointed out that "while transforming the terrorists, simultaneously the general life standard of the people also should be uplifted to win the hearts and minds in order to ensure a long lasting peace."

The session which was chaired by the Secretary General of the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process, Prof. Rajiva Wijesinha, had as its discussants the Minister of Social Services and Social Welfare, Douglas Devananda and the Coordinator of the Nepal Council of World Affairs and expert on peace building, Dr. Som Pudasaini.

Minister Devananda noted that "the LTTE thrives on the Tamil cause. It has stood in the way of negotiated settlement within the framework of united Sri Lanka, fearing such an arrangement would not give room for their fascist rule of law." He stressed that "the fundamental concept of tackling terrorism is that we should not do what the terrorist expect us to do; in other words we should not fall prey to their maneuvers. LTTE terrorism too has to be tackled keeping this notion in mind."

The International Conference on Countering Terrorism, which concluded its session brought together renowned terrorism experts, including academia and the media, from Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Czech Republic, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Israel, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, the United States of America and Vietnam.



Food Supplies to Jaffna – An Update January, 2008

Objective

The overall objective of the Government of Sri Lanka is to develop the North and East as a hospitable and attractive place and establish an environment where people will have freedom to live and pursue livelihoods of their choice; restore peace and ethnic harmony leading to rapid social and economic development.

**Mahinda
Chinthanaya**

Government's Humanitarian Commitments

The Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) being conscious of its manifold duties to take care and provide for all its citizens, has taken adequate steps to ensure the availability of the essential needs of the people in the Jaffna peninsula, Mullaithivu, Killinochchi, Vavuniya, Mannar and Batticaloa districts, and more particularly since 11 August 2006 to address the humanitarian concerns of the Jaffna peninsula.

It has taken full responsibility to supply the needs of the people in Jaffna and has used the sea route to ensure that adequate supplies of food and other essential items are sent and that the people are also able to move freely to other parts of the country.

Closure of A9 Route

The Government was compelled to temporarily close the A9 route, entry/exit checkpoint at Muhamalai situated at the isthmus of the Jaffna peninsula on 11 August 2006. The closure was necessitated due to the massive artillery and mortar attack launched by the LTTE on the government forces on that day which destroyed the entire infrastructure built by the GoSL at Muhamalai to facilitate the movement of people and goods.

The LTTE since then has continued with planned attacks on Government forces regularly causing death and injury.

The GoSL is unable to open the checkpoint at Muhamalai until the area is safe for the movement of civilians and supplies, and certain that national security will not be compromised.



Supply Update – Jaffna (254, 250 MT as at January 30, 2008)

In co - ordination with the Ministry of Human Rights and Disaster Management, Ministry of Nation Building, Commissioner General of Essential Service (CGES), Sri Lanka Army, Sri Lanka Navy, Sri Lanka Air Force, Government Agent of Jaffna, and the private sector, the Government ensures continued transport of essential supplies to Jaffna peninsula by sea and air.

The Government has in association with the private sector, as of January 30, 2008, dispatched a quantum of **254, 250 MT** of essential supplies and an adequate stock of fuel to the Jaffna peninsula

Logistics - Jaffna

About 10 cargo vessels are now in use to ferry goods from Colombo to Jaffna and to keep stocks in Jaffna at safe levels. This is a joint effort on the part of the Govt. and the private sector.

These cargo vessels have a total capacity to supply 30, 000 MT per month to Jaffna, while the total monthly requirement of the people of Jaffna in terms of food and other essential items has been assessed as 25,000 MT.



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JAFFNA – Economic perspective

The Population - Estimates vary as shown below:

633, 163

(Source - Government Agent of Jaffna, July, 2007)

590, 000

(Source – Dept. of Census & Statistics, 2007)

Required Essential

Monthly Food Supply - **12, 000 MT**

Supply of food items to Jaffna by - Sea and Air from mid - August 2006 to January 2008.

Breakdown:

77	CGES Vessels
55	Private Vessels
132	Total No. of Voyages
14	Total No. of flights

Total tonnage of cargo sent to Jaffna in vessels hired by CGES	153,332 MT
Total tonnage of cargo sent to Jaffna in vessels by private vessels	100,712 MT
Total tonnage of cargo sent to Jaffna by air flights	206.0 MT
Total tonnage sent to GA, Jaffna	254,250 MT

(Source: CGES February 05th 2008)

Prices of Goods as at February 5th 2008 is as follows;

Items	Qty	Jaffna Consumer Prices (10th Oct) (Retail Price)	Jaffna Consumer Prices (5th Feb) (Retail Price)	Indexed
Soap - Lux	1 Unit	28.00	27.00	96
Sunlight	1 Unit	28.00	28.00	100
Toothpaste (medium)	1 Unit	65.00	65.00	100
Tooth Brush	1 Unit	30.00	30.00	100
Gram flour	1 kg	180.00	55.00	31
Margarine(100g)	1 Pkt	75.00	75.00	100



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Noodles	1 Kg	85.00	80.00	94
Lentils	1 kg	140.00	140.00	100
Coconuts	1 Unit	60.00	50.00	83
Sugar	1 kg	70.00	68.00	97
Milk powder	1 Pkt	270.00	300.00	111
Wheat Flour (Kg)	1 kg	77.00	78.00	101
Eggs	1 Unit	24.00	25.00	104
Yeast (Kg)		450.00	450.00	100
Bread (450 gr)	1 Unit	43.00	43.00	100
Rice (Samba)	1 kg	80.00	75.00	94
Potatoes	1 kg	150.00	160.00	107
Onions	1 kg	40.00	120.00	300
Brinjals	1 kg	350.00	120.00	34
Carrots	1 kg	60.00	60.00	100
Green gram	1 kg	120.00	120.00	100
Salt (kg)	1 kg	40.00	45.00	113
Box of Matches	1 Carton	30.00	30.00	100
Panadol (Card)	1 Card	20.00	20.00	100
Coriander		280.00	280.00	100
Kadala gram		150.00	150.00	100
Canned Fish (Medium)	1 Tin	120.00	160.00	133
Candles (medium)	1 Unit	1.00	1.00	100
Mosquito coils	1 Pkt	50.00	50.00	100
Dried Red chillies	1 kg	240.00	240.00	100
Kerosene oil (liter)	1 Ltr	77.00	77.00	100
Coconut oil	1 Ltr	190.00	240.00	126
Vegetable oil (liter)	1 Ltr	190.00	230.00	121

Source : - Jaffna Prices from Chamber of Commerce and Industries of Yarlpanam and Local Monitor for SCOPP

The above prices in the month of January in the market place reflect the supply chain performance based on the dynamics of supply and demand.



SCOPP Launches 'Peace Collection' Brand

A key to achieving a cessation of hostilities and ushering in peace is the uplifting of economic activity in the conflict affected areas of the country. The people living in areas that were once under the subjugation of the LTTE were stifled from having any personal contact or trade with the outside world. A sustainable peace will require assistance in livelihood development that will allow them profitable economic activity.

To help in such efforts the Peace Secretariat has initiated the concept of a 'Peace Collection' Brand.

The products that will be initially launched under the 'Peace Collection' brand will be traditional gourmet rice and bees honey produced in distant villages of the East. Each of these villages will be directly linked to a private sector organization based in Colombo, for purpose of obtaining financial assistance on research and development (R and D), purchase of machinery and the development of package for marketing.

Another initiative in this connection is a project in collaboration with the Rural Enterprise Network (REN) to develop a link to 500 farmer clusters which will constitute the supply chain for products originating in the Eastern Province. The 'Peace Collection' will encompass these products as well.

All 'Peace Collection' products will be made available in the leading supermarkets of Colombo particularly aimed at the affluent consumer who may wish to contribute towards re-building the livelihoods of people living in conflict affected areas in the North and East.

SCOPP will play a facilitator role in this novel private - public sector initiative, **which is aimed at ensuring self sufficiency and empowerment, and restoring dignity, for people usually confined to dependency in conflict affected areas.**





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Share a 'Peace Meal' and help to sustain the livelihoods of rural communities in conflict-affected areas.



Rathdel

100% pesticide free traditional rice



Suwandel



Kaluheenati



Peace Collection Traditional Rice is grown and harvested in rural communities in the North and East of Sri Lanka, following age-old methods without the use of chemicals or pesticides. When you enjoy its wholesome goodness, you will in turn help these rural farmers to build and nurture their lives and livelihoods, because proceeds from the sale of Peace Collection products go towards their development. So this is your opportunity to give the best to your family whilst helping to better the lives of families in rural Sri Lanka.



Marketed by: Rural Enterprise network,
441/6 Highlevel Road, Gangodawila, Nugegoda. Tel/Fax: 94 11 2812060
email: information@rensri.lanka.org

From the National Federation for the Conservation of Traditional Rice and Agricultural Resources





The East surges ahead under a New Vision

In keeping with the Mahinda Chinthanaya, the 180 day development programme, which was the first phase of the 'Eastern Re-awakening' (Nagenahira Nawodaya) was launched on 19th July 2007 and came to an end on 19th January 2008 with considerable progress made on infrastructure development, restoration of civil administration and service delivery systems in the East. In keeping with its launch a Stakeholder Awareness and Participatory Workshop was held in Colombo, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara. The Negenahira Navodaya was an initiative which brought together central and provincial levels of Government in carrying out development work in the Eastern Province. Selected areas of progress made during this phase are as follows.

Business and Enterprise

The Ministry of Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion has offered a special Incentive Package for the projects to be set up in the Province itself to expedite development activities. The Board of Investment (BOI) is currently offering income tax concessions for new investments (Trade, Tourism, Agriculture and Fisheries to receive tax holidays up to 15 years and Dairy industry up to 20 years) and the revival of ailing companies and the expansion of existing companies would be awarded a 10 year tax holiday (which require a fresh 100 million rupee investment). These incentives are directed towards promoting the Trincomalee Special Economic Zone which was declared as a licensed zone of the BOI by a Government Gazette Notification dated 15th February 2006.

The Ministry of Trade, Marketing Development, Co-operatives & Consumer Services has observed that the most affected trades due to the armed conflict in the region were the agro business, paddy, animal husbandry, dairy products, textile and gold. Therefore the initial focus was on development of rural co-operatives and small markets to give tangible benefits to the people at village level. At present 44 MPCs are operating in the Eastern Province. In addition there are 10 Milk and dairy production co-operatives in operation. Six textile co-operatives and 304 active fisheries co-operatives are also in operation.

Restoration of Civil Administration

The Ministry of Constitutional Affairs and National Integration supported by the Ministries of Public Administration, Internal Affairs and Social Services conducted a Mobile Service in 45 Divisional Secretary Divisions in the Eastern Province. The Mobile Service was equipped with an eye clinic, a driving test centre, a studio, a post office, a bank and facilities were provided for the public to get their photographs, and stamps required to apply for National Identity Cards free of charge. This service issued over 22, 000 National Identity Cards, 1,500 Passports, land documentation, spectacles, birth and death certificates and driving licences

all of which were documentation required for the people of the East to carry on their lives on a day to day basis.

With a view to providing the people of the East with employable skills and training, the Ministry of Vocational Training plans to increase the number of training centres by 19 and training programs by 48. This will enable an increase in the intake of participants up to 9000 in the three districts. Thus six new vocational training centres are currently under construction at Central Camp, Ninthavur, Sammanturai, Akkaraipattu, Karaitivu, Kaluwanchikudi, where programmes would begin in June 2008. In addition, on 23rd January 2008, the Marvell Sarvodaya Vocational Training Centre was declared open.

Proposed building for Kaluwanchikudi



Proposed building for Central Camp



Resettlement of IDPs

While resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has been systematically taking place it is observed that around 187,850 persons are yet to be resettled in the North and East of Sri Lanka. All IDPs are protected by the Government of Sri Lanka. In IDP welfare camps, all individuals are provided with basic food items. Upon



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their resettlement this supply of basic food continues for a period of six months. In addition, essential items which consist of complementary food & non food relief items are provided to each family at an estimated value of Rs 8000. Children are provided with special nutritional food items as well.



Livelihood Assistance for the IDPs

Livelihood Assistance for the IDPs is coordinated by the Consultative Committee for Humanitarian Affairs Sub Committee on Livelihood by Ministry of Fisheries & Aquatic Resources and International Labour Organization (ILO). Under the Unified Assistance Scheme, a payment of Rs. 25, 000 has been provided to 800 beneficiaries in Vaharai, in order to embark on livelihood development activities. The above Committee has also drafted Standards and Guidelines for Early Economic Recovery, which would enable all agencies involved in livelihood or early recovery programmes in the North and East to have firm, transparent coordination and common approaches to dealing with critical issues that would naturally arise while providing meaningful assistance during conflict and crisis situations.

Midday Meals for Students

The Trincomalee District includes the Education Zones of Trincomalee, Mutur and Kantale which have 258 Government schools, with a student population of 95,765. The Education Ministry continues to implement its schools food programme, providing midday meals to 100% of the schools in the district, 50% of the text books have already been delivered to the schools. 14 Schools in Muttur, 14 in Ech-chalampattu and 02 in Seruwila Divisional Secretariat divisions have now been reopened.

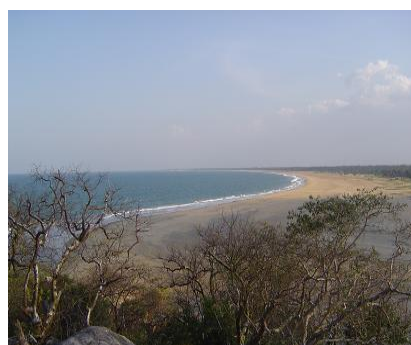
The Future

The Government is committed to democratize the development and administration in the East and thus intends to have local government elections in nine Local Authorities in the Batticaloa District in March 2008. Therefore, five new political parties i.e. the TMVP, Nawa Sinhala Urumaya, Okkoma Wesiya Okkoma Rajawaru, Pathmanabha Eelam People's Revolutionary Front and the Muslim Liberation Front were registered by the Elections Commissioner's Department in mid - January. Once the people in the East elect their own representatives to Local Government, they will continue to receive Govt. support on all development projects.

The East, despite a chequered past of destroyed homes, roads, buildings, hearts and lives, is now on the path to recovery, slowly yet steadily, due to the initiatives taken by the Government of Sri Lanka. The Eastern Re-awakening is not yet complete. There is yet much to be done and it will be achieved with the Government's development plan. Livelihood, Education, Health, Resettlement and Economic Development are some of the key areas which will be focused upon in the phases of development in the coming year. Reintegration and rehabilitation will also play a central role in the Eastern Province, enabling individuals to re-enter society, develop skills and seek employment away from the cycle of weapons and violence.

Following the Eastern liberation it is slowly regaining its long standing reputation as the **"bread basket of the country."**

Vaharai (East Coast)



Location Trincomalee





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Eastern Province- Scenic Landscapes



Trinco Town Beach



Ampara



Trinco Fort



Vakarai



IDPs celebrate Thai Pongal in Batticaloa

Upon the government security forces launching humanitarian operations to regain the East from terrorist control, several families in the Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts were moved to relatively safer areas under the aegis of the Government. They were given shelter in mostly Government run Welfare Centres or their essential needs met by the Government and NGOs based in these areas. With relative normalcy returning to the Eastern Province, almost 90% of these families have now been resettled in their original places of residence by the Government. The residents displaced from Mutur East in the Trincomalee District continue to remain in Welfare Camps until the area is cleared of landmines planted by the LTTE.

As part of its overall policy to cater to the religious and cultural needs of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), the Government made arrangements for special Thai Pongal Day activities to be conducted in the IDP Camps, with the main ceremony being held at the Zahira IDP Welfare Camp on the 15th January. The Social Affairs Unit of SCOPP coordinated the event with the relevant authorities, while funds were provided by the Ministry of Resettlement. The special Pongal day events were organized by the Batticaloa Government Agent and the Manmunai –North Divisional Secretary.

At present, IDP families are being temporarily housed at the Zahira Welfare Camp and in adjoining camps. The head of the Camp and the residents decorated the site specially constructed for the occasion and made arrangements for the conduct of the Pooja early in the morning. The religious ceremonies commenced with the Pooja while devotional songs were played over loudspeakers. GCE Advanced Level students from the camp sang devotional songs on this occasion. Prasatham and Pongal were offered to the devotees. Three little girls described their camp life in poignant verse, with a stress on their yearning to return to their homes. Music and dance form an integral part of Tamil culture, and this was vividly displayed by several talented youngsters through a variety of dance performances.

The Government Agent for Batticaloa in his address made a plea for the officials of the Government Peace Secretariat to do everything possible to help resettle the camp IDPs in their villages as soon as possible.



The Deputy Director of the Social Affairs Unit of SCOPP thanked the Government Agent and other officials for their unstinted effort in organizing the Pongal Day programme.

In the evening, the Government Information Department in association with SCOPP screened a variety of Tamil films. A large number of people from among more than 1,500 persons belonging to about 275 families residing in the Zahira and adjoining Camps, watched these films with great interest until well past midnight.

The IDPs in expressing their appreciation said that on this day they felt that they had been relieved of the scourge of terrorism and expressed the hope that they would be able to return to their homes in the near future.



Aceh Peace Process stakeholders and facilitators visit SCOPP

A highly representative delegation associated with the Aceh Peace Process in Indonesia visited the Peace Secretariat (SCOPP) on Wednesday, December 12, 2007 for a brief discussion and an exchange of views and insights on conflict resolution based on experiences gathered from peace initiatives in the two countries. The discussion covered a range of issues such as history of the dispute, elements of the Aceh Memorandum of Understanding, devolution of power, regional autonomy under a Unitary Constitution, direct foreign investment, economic assistance from the Central Government, de-commissioning of weapons, re-integration of combatants into civilian life, and the overall lessons for Sri Lanka.

The visiting delegation comprised Indonesian Government officials, representatives of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and foreign peace facilitators. The party consisted of Mr. Azwar Abubakar, former Deputy Governor of the Aceh Province, Mr. Nurdin Abdul Rahuman, Regent of Bireuen District of Aceh and a Peace Negotiator on behalf of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) at the Helsinki Peace Talks, Mr. Zainal Arifin and Mr. Anwar Noer (Indonesian Government Representatives to the Aceh Monitoring Mission), Mr. William Ozkaptan, Co - ordinator of the Aceh Peace Resource Center, Prof. Lucie White, Harvard Law School, Professor Anthony Reid, Historian, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, and Mr. Aguswandi, post - conflict Advisor, Aceh Peace Resource Center.

This delegation was a part of a larger team from overseas that participated in a seminar entitled "The Story of Aceh - Insights", held at the SLFI, Colombo from the 11th to the 12th December 2007. The Seminar was jointly sponsored by Muslim Aid, UMCOR and the Methodist Church of Sri Lanka. It was the first such delegation connected to the Aceh Peace Process, to travel overseas since the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Indonesian Government in 2006.

Members of the delegation expressed confidence in the stability of the Aceh Peace Process and the co - operative manner in which the provisions of the Peace Agreement were being currently implemented. SCOPP Officials in turn stressed that the Government of Sri Lanka

was seeking a negotiated solution to the political problems of the conflict and was prepared to return to the negotiating table unconditionally and in a spirit of compromise.

Rajiva Wijesinha, Secretary - General of SCOPP to the Souvenir released at this Seminar. He observes as follows:

" We in Asia tend to know little about our near and distant neighbors. We tend therefore to ignore the lessons we can learn from conflicts, and more importantly conflict management, in countries such as India and Indonesia that have managed, despite such varied populations, to build up a national identity. This does not mean that they are without difficulties, but the successes they have experienced in dealing with difficulties should be useful to us in our own situation."

Professor Wijesinha further says:

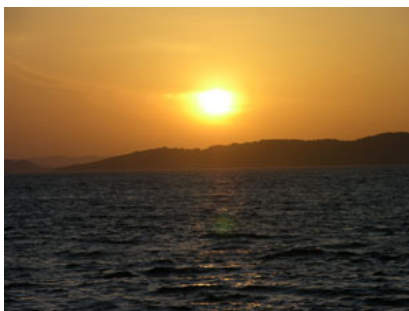
" solutions proved relatively simple because of the deep commitment of the antagonists to peace. Once the threat of separation was removed, the Indonesian government proved itself eager to compromise, and was prepared to negotiate a devolution package that allowed the people of Aceh decision making powers with regard to their lives and resources. Conversely the Free Aceh Movement gave up its demand for independence and handed over its weapons, while ensuring social reintegration of its cadres together with full political rights within a democratic dispensation"

The group photograph below shows members of the visiting delegation with SCOPP officials.





Verugal - High Potential as Major Tourist Site



Trincomalee with an area of 2727 square kilometers, has one of the best beaches in the world, extending over a distance of 80 kilometers. The natural harbour, hot water springs, Koneswarar

Rock, Kodiyar Gulf, Arugam Bay which is world famous for wind surfing, Pasikuda, Nilaweli beach, the Kumana Bird Sanctuary – one could go on and on enumerating the attractions of this region. This region had been a tourism venue which suffered due to the conflict.

A SCOPP team which visited Trincomalee and its environs recently to assess the humanitarian needs of the people was able to find many areas that could be converted into veritable local and foreign tourist destinations.

The coastal village of Verugal has been identified as a major tourist area with great potential.

The Verugal beach defies description due to its breathtaking beauty. It could somewhat be compared with the famous Marina Beach in Chennai, South India.

Fishing is the main livelihood activity of the people of Verugal and coupled with tourism, it could be transformed into a potent force with beneficial effects on the people who had suffered the ravages of war and terrorism.

Improved transport facilities would be available to the region when the government completes the Pulmodai – Verugal highway project linked to the main Trincomalee-Batticaloa highway.

The 700-million rupee China Bay – Kinniya Bridge, the Thambalgamam main road, the 50-million rupee Yan Oya – Pudawaikattu – Pulmodai highway as well as the Polonnaruwa – Trincomalee highway would underpin major tourism development initiatives in the East.

A Political Solution, but not to cater only to Tigers

Excerpts from an interview that appeared in the Lankadeepa on February 12th 2008

Rajiva Wijesinha
Secretary General
Secretariat for Co-ordinating the Peace Process

The All Party Representative Committee (APRC) recently presented interim proposals to provide a solution to the problems in the North and East of the country. The government has accepted these proposals, which were signed by thirteen political parties, making clear that a majority of the democratically elected representatives of the people of this country agree with these proposals. The special characteristic of these proposals is the ability to implement them without looking for any amendment of the constitution.

Clearly a political solution is essential for the prevailing national problem, which began with political questions. A solution should be achieved not through the division of the country but through the devolution of power. By devolution is meant a system that will empower the public to make decisions about matters that affect it closely. But, in facilitating this, we need to pay attention to a prevalent fear, that devolution could lead to a division of the country. The 13th amendment, which was passed twenty years ago, will not rouse such a fear, but earlier it was difficult to assert how effective it was since the LTTE had been against it from the start. However the need to give the LTTE a decisive voice passed with the abrogation of the Ceasefire Agreement that was signed with the LTTE, so now we now have an opportunity to implement the 13th amendment. In that sense the country obtained much greater freedom with regard to moving towards a solution with the abrogation of this Agreement.

In 1987 the 13th amendment to the constitution was passed in accordance with the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement. It was accepted by all minority parties, including initially the LTTE, though they soon rejected it and fell out with India. Because at that stage the Sri Lankan government got close to the LTTE, even though subsequently the LTTE returned to war against the Sri Lankan government too, the view point was created that a problem which in reality involves a multitude of stakeholders was essentially between the government and the LTTE. So, for a solution to work, it was thought that it had to be acceptable to both the government and the LTTE. This approach was reinforced by the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement, which in effect sidelined the other Tamil political parties, for whom there was no place in the peace process.



MULTI-ETHNIC CULTURAL PROGRAM IN AMPARA DISTRICT

Intra-bonding in peace and harmony, was highly visible in the multi-cultural program held at the D.S. Senanayake National School in Ampara from 19th Oct to 21st Oct 2007. Sinhalese, Muslims, Tamils and Burghers in the district participated in this festival organized by the Government Agent for Ampara. All funds for the event were raised by the local community in the area.

Thirty six (36) artists from all ethnic strata were honored at this event. The diverse richness in multi ethnic cultural traditions was amply demonstrated. This initiative can be described as a bench mark in peace and confidence building in the region where all three communities are living together, despite false claims that it is fragmented. This unity is significant in the aftermath of the liberation of the Eastern Province by Government Forces from the hands of the LTTE, and return of life in the Ampara District to relative normalcy.



Multi-Cultural Display



Artists were honored



Multi-Cultural Display



GA addressing the event



New Peace Corps Launched in Sri Lanka

A new 'Peace Corps' was launched at St Thomas' College, Mt Lavinia on November 6, 2007. Hon. Justice Shirani Tilakawardene was the Chief Guest. It is a joint project between the Rotary Club of Re-connection and the Secretariat for Co-ordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) in Sri Lanka to inculcate the values of peaceful co-existence between people at an early stage of a growing child.



Hon. Justice Shirani Tilakawardena – Chief Guest

The Objectives of the Peace Corps will be to promote and raise awareness on:

- National Language Policy in schools
- Human Rights
- IDP relocation strategy and livelihood development work done by the International and local organizations.
- Economic Development initiatives in the conflict areas of the country
- The new governance structure based on proposals of the All Party Representatives Committee (APRC)
- The Military strategy in combating terrorism
- The essence of Peace talks

There will be a guest speaker on each of the above named areas. 'Peace Corps' will organize the function. *The Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process & Rotary Club of Reconnection will assist to find a resource person whilst engaging in micro activity at each school.* This project will be done with the support of the Rotary Club of Re-connections so that there will be a link to the business world of Sri Lanka.

Through the Peace Corps, students will be given an opportunity to understand the elements of the peace process in Sri Lanka and other countries, promote the UNESCO values such as tolerance, diversity, and allow students to interact with schools in conflict affected areas and jointly participate in projects with such schools.



Winning Hearts through Sports



The Jaffna peninsular has produced outstanding sportsmen and sportswomen over the years. St. John's, St. Patrick's, Tellipalai Union, Manipay Hindu and the Jaffna College among others, have stood out in producing both scholars and excellent sportsmen; who in their adulthood rendered an immense service to the country in their chosen fields.

Unfortunately, terrorism changed this trend and the overall terrain in the peninsular. Over the past quarter century, the youth of Jaffna were confronted with an unnerving problem; forced conscription by the LTTE. Their anxious parents have been left with very little choice but to seek admitting them to schools outside Jaffna to foil LTTE attempts to recruit them as child soldiers.

The Government's efforts are now focused on directing the youth of Jaffna away from the grip of the LTTE and towards the path of non-violence and constructive engagement in various activities, including sports.

On an initiative taken by SCOPP and enthusiastically jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Sports and Sri Lanka Cricket, a combined team of school cricketers from the North and the East visited Colombo recently to play a series of matches with a combined school team from the District of Colombo. Hotel accommodation in Colombo was provided to the visiting school cricketers and the accompanying officials. The occasion was reminiscent of the time in the not too distant past when youths from any part of the country were able to move freely throughout the island and interact with each other.

The Honorable Prime Minister hosted a reception at his Office to the teams and officials, and welcomed their presence.

The visiting players showed great talent and promise in their cricket prowess. Jackson of St. Patrick's College, Jaffna who skippered the team said "We do not have turf grounds and play on hard surface", while making a plea for the construction of turf pitches in Jaffna.

The Visiting Team Coach, Mr. Nishanthan said, "The youth of Jaffna are more dedicated than in the past to academic pursuits and sports. They stay clear of armed groups. These youngsters who face terrorism in the day to day life of the community in Jaffna have come to appreciate the importance and the need for peace". They smilingly said that the Peace Secretariat had given them an opportunity to forget the conflict for a moment.

The match itself generated keen interest. Relatives of the youth from the North and East living in Colombo were present at the Police Park in addition to the other spectators.

They have made an appeal to the sponsors to continue to stage such events and pledged all possible support on their part.

The young cricketers were well hosted and taken around Colombo on a shopping trip. They participated in a special religious Pooja at the Sri Kathiresan Temple in Wellawatte.

After enjoying a day of outing in Colombo and suburbs they expressed the hope that similar circumstances would soon dawn in their areas as well, for the people to move about freely and lead their lives in an environment of peace and prosperity.



SCOPP QUARTERLY

Secretariat for coordinating the peace process

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Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP)

Born out of a need to institutionalize the Peace Process, the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) was established on 06 February 2002 with the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL). The Secretariat was headed by **Bernard Goonetilleke (2002-2004)**, **Jayantha Dhanapala (2004-2005)** and **Dr. Palitha Kohona (2006-2007)**. **Prof Rajiva Wijesinha** is the current Secretary General of SCOPP.

SCOPP employees are drawn from both private and public sectors and include specialists in Communications, Diplomacy, Economics, and Law.

For over two years since its inception, SCOPP was under the direct purview of the Prime Minister. Currently, it comes under the direct purview of His Excellency the President.

SCOPP is Primarily a coordinating and facilitating body of the Peace Process. It is the main instrument of the Government to consolidate and strengthen the Peace Process. SCOPP engages in extensive consultations with all stakeholders involved in the Peace Process including the public and private sectors, civil society, donor community and line agencies on a regular basis.

Vision

To act as the cutting edge of the Government of Sri Lanka to consolidate and strengthen the peace process on behalf of all Sri Lankan citizens, whilst promoting a negotiated settlement to the current conflict

Mission

To develop confidence in the peace process and its potential benefits for all Sri Lankan citizens, whilst building up an institution that is equitable and acts in the national interest of all our people, and is accepted as such

Strategy

1. To act as a resource centre for the government of Sri Lanka and its representatives in any negotiations and contribute to their appreciation of the various needs and requirements of all affected parties
2. To liaise with facilitators and potential facilitators of the peace process so as to
 - a) ensure synergy by bringing together all possible stakeholders and developing awareness of the wider benefits of cooperation and mutual understanding
 - b) promote activities that develop a sense of ownership, responsibility and commitment amongst all Sri Lankan citizens with regard to the peace process and related reforms
 - c) promote constitutional changes that will ensure security and confidence for all citizens whilst facilitating efficiency and 'good governance'
 - d) ensure commitment, in particular through its own practices, to truth and objectivity in reporting events and responses to them, and minimize distortion and innuendo that will weaken confidence in the peace process
 - e) remove barriers to economic activity and social intercourse, whilst recognizing and respecting security constraints due to continuing terrorist activity
 - f) drive livelihood development activities, and in particular for IOPS, with relevant stakeholders so that adequate income generation alternatives are provided to the people in the East and North
 - g) facilitate training and education as well as investment in areas affected by war so as to enhance opportunities for individuals as well as the wider society in such areas
 - h) initiate programmes that would contribute to greater understanding of mutual needs and promote strategies to satisfy these
 - i) ensure transparency in its relations with stakeholders and encourage all of them to work to similar standards
 - j) enhance understanding of other peace processes and assess their relevance to the Sri Lankan situation

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