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"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." – Henry Ford

Global Tamil Forum (GTF) was formally inaugurated on Wednesday 24th February 2010 in London.

GTF is formed by globally uniting Diaspora grassroots organisations from 15 countries in all five continents.

The Inaugural General Meeting took place with participation of GTF delegates, invited guests, Cabinet & Shadow Ministers, cross party MPs, foreign dignitaries and international media personnel.

Following the successful launch of the concept back in July 2009 and formal launch in Paris in August 2009, GTF has been working towards building a strong, structured, well participated internationally co-coordinated group with identified avenues to fulfil the three main objectives of the organisation: To help free interned Tamils and men and women held without proper legal representation



Global Tamil Forum Inauguration

To help prosecute war criminals and persons who committed crimes against humanity in Sri Lanka

To lobby international governments, non-governmental organisations and institutions to help to resolve the conflict in Sri Lanka on the basis of legitimate democratic mandate given by the Tamil people in Sri Lanka.

As part of the first objective, GTF has initiated a program to sponsor 1,000 orphaned disabled Tamil children and 450 destitute families by the recent war in the Vanni. At present 235 children and 90 families are already being funded.

As part of the second objective, GTF is in the process of collecting evidence and seeking advice on formal process and avenues to prove war crimes and crimes against humanity.

As part of the third objective GTF, through the various country organisations, are actively engaging with senior politicians, civil servants and members of non-governmental organisations

and institutions in bringing wider awareness of the injustices done to the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The attendance and participation of national and international, political and non-political delegates in the inauguration event was a key milestone for GTF being recognised as a coordinated Diaspora body and a welcomed expression of willingness to coordinate efforts going forward to achieving the people's objectives.

The event also included the inauguration of Global Tamil Women Forum (GTWF) which has been formed with the vision to unite, represent and empower Tamil women in the island of Sri Lanka and Diaspora host countries.

Australian Tamil Congress (ATC) Women's Advocacy Group has made strides in raising critical issues faced by Tamil women and children with key politicians and non-government organisations in Australia. The women's lobby group has worked collaboratively with a number of other organisations in Australia. It is intended to expand this network through GTWF to unite the efforts of Tamil Women activists globally.

British Foreign Secretary David Milliband, Conservative Shadow Foreign Secretary William Hague and Liberal Democrats Shadow Foreign Secretary Ed Davey all addressed the Global Tamil Forum's inaugural meeting in London on Wednesday, 24 February. The Global Tamil Forum (GTF) launch saw delegates from 14 countries gather in the UK House of Commons to be addressed by speakers from across the political spectrum, including parliamentarians, councilors and prospective parliamentary candidates. Some delegates were also invited in for a private meeting with Prime Minister Gordon Brown. The meeting, in the Gladstone Room of the House of Commons, began at 10am and concluded at 4pm, followed by a reception between 4pm and 6pm at the Terrace Cafeteria. Among the guests were a Buddhist monk and an Islamic theologian, both of whom had travelled from Sri Lanka for the event. An African National Congress parliamentarian from South Africa, Sisa Njikelana, had flown to Britain especially for the event and was in the country for only 6 hours.



.Mr Miliband made the opening address to the forum, calling for a peaceful political solution to the problems that caused the war.

In his address to members Foreign Secretary David Miliband said “I think that it is very significant indeed that the Global Tamil Forum should have brought people together from fourteen countries. That in itself is a huge

From Australia, Australian Tamil Congress Chairman Dr Raj Rajeswaran, Director of Public Relations and official spokesperson Dr Sam Pari and five other ATC representatives from various states attended the inauguration.

Dr Sam Pari also spoke at the launch and was given the opportunity to attend a private meeting held by

Prime Minister Gordon Brown with a group of delegates in the Commons.

GTF envisages being a truly representative body of the Tamil Diaspora to unite and address the immediate needs of the Tamils in Sri Lanka and working towards a permanent solution for the oppressed Tamil people of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka summoned the acting British High Commissioner in Colombo yesterday to protest over an address by David Miliband, the Foreign Secretary, to a meeting of ethnic Tamil activists in the Houses of Parliament.

Rohitha Bogollagama, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, told a news conference that the Global Tamil Forum was an “umbrella organisation” for the Tamil Tiger rebels, who were defeated last year.

He said that Mr Miliband’s presence at the group’s inaugural meeting appeared to indicate his support for its “separatist agenda” and was “inimical to the national interest of Sri Lanka”.

The forum denies advocating violence and says that it is campaigning for self-determination for Sri Lankan Tamils, and to bring to justice perpetrators of alleged war crimes during the 26-year civil war.

William Hague, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, made the closing address to the meeting, which was also attended by several other MPs in a show of cross-party support for Sri Lankan Tamils.



Vaddukkodai Resolution comes to Australia

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Vaddukkoaddai Resolution
அவுஸ்திரேலிய இலங்கைத் தமிழர்களின் வாக்களிப்பு
17th & 18th of April 20 10

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உங்கள் வாக்குகளை அளிக்கத் தயாராக இருங்கள்

வாக்குக்கணிப்பு Referendum

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being Chinese) ancient civilizations still thriving as a modern one and has enriched Human Civilisation very much. Hence Tamils contribution to multi culturalism will be very rich and therefore while it is the duty of the Diaspora Tamils to participate in the voting and say "YES", it is also the duty of the International Community to encourage this process which as a matter of fact is calling for the recognition of the Right of Self Determination of Eelam Tamils.

Once the VKR voting is over in most of the countries, it is imperative that the Diaspora Tamils continue with the International campaign for the recognition of the Right of Self Determination of Eelam Tamils till such recognition is achieved.

Everyone would have understood that the vote on the Vaddukodai Resolution (VKR) has been scheduled for 17th and 18th of April in Australia. Those who have been following the Referendums in other countries of Europe and America may have even felt that we are late. It is better to be late than never. In a sense it may never be late till Eelam is established. What the Diaspora Tamils are doing is really to uphold the spirit of Eelam at a time when the Tamils in Eelam are at their low in all respects.

The Resolution, as stated therein, is based on the right of Self Determination inherent to every Nation. The Resolution adopted by the convention of 14th and 15th May 1976 was endorsed by the Eelam Tamils overwhelmingly in the 1977

Parliamentary elections. Neither the Sri Lankan government nor the International Community recognized this sovereign right of the Eelam-Tamil Nation but the oppression of the Eelam Tamils intensified at an accelerating pace resulting in armed resistance which was defeated in May 2009 by the Sri Lankan government with the help of 20 governments pushing the Eelam Tamils to the present very low level. The Presidential election of January 2010 has clearly shown that Eelam Tamils will not get even any significant devolution by negotiation. It is to be noted that the Eelam Tamils and the LTTE were prepared to experiment an arrangement like ISGA based on the fallback position of the Right of Self Determination but instead a military solution which the Sinhala Nation claimed as a "Victory" has been imposed. The victors of the war both

local and international are of the opinion that Tamils should accept whatever given and when the Eelam Tamils were unable to raise their voice, the Diaspora Tamils in various countries have started adopting VKR by overwhelming majorities. Australian Tamils have their turn on 17th and 18th of April. It is to be noted that Diaspora Tamils are voting **for and on behalf of Eelam Tamils who have been silenced for the "time being" but who as a distinct Nation have the inalienable right of Self Determination.** No doubt the Diaspora Tamils have a stake in this because under the VKR, they can opt to become citizens of Eelam or if they choose to remain in their adopted countries which are multi cultural in nature, Eelam will be the source of multiculturalism to the Diaspora Tamils. Tamil civilization which is one of the two (other

ATC's Message to Members

The Australian Tamil Congress is proud to endorse the Vaddukodai Referendum and express our support for this initiative.

We ask our members and others to participate and support the resolution. We also ask our members to help with organising the referendum by contacting the Tamil Referendum Council of Australia.

Please kindly forward this email to your family and friends and encourage their participation.

Kind regards,
Australian Tamil Congress
Executive Committee

Report from ATC New South Wales

Meeting with Senator Sarah Hanson-Young

National Women's Advocacy Group met with Senator Sarah Hanson-Young and discussed the asylum seekers issues and the root cause for the Tamil people fleeing the land of their birth. Outcome was positive

Meeting with Minister Bob McMullan

National Women's Advocacy Group met with Hon Bob McMullan and discussed the foreign aid and aid programs for Tamil women and children to be set up in the North and East of Sri Lanka.

Dinner with Ms Julie Owens and Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Hon Chris Evans

ATC representatives attended a fundraising dinner hosted by Ms Julie Owens.

Senator Chris Evans was the guest speaker. ATC representatives had the opportunity to meet and discuss issues concerning Tamils with Senator Chris Evans.

Lunch with Treasurer Hon Wayne Swan and Ms Julie Owens

Women from the National Women's Advocacy Group met Treasurer Hon Wayne Swan for lunch and had the opportunity to meet few other key parliamentarians.

Membership Drive

Tamils in Sydney celebrated Thamilar ondru koodal event organised by the Tamil Youth Organisation (TYO) on Australia day. It was estimated over 3000 Tamils attended the event which was a huge success.

The organisers requested ATC being the political body

representing the Tamils to invite parliamentarians for the event to attend. Ms Julie Owens and The Hon Laurie Ferguson attended and spoke at the event.

ATC had a successful membership at the event. ATC had a stall at the event and many volunteers helped through out the day. Newsletters and other promotional materials were distributed.

Here's a story about not giving up hope.

Once upon a time, not so long ago, and maybe not even so far away from where you live now, there lived many animals in a deep, green forest. And they lived in relative harmony, except when one animal was eaten by another animal as sometimes happens in a deep, green forest. But that was appreciated as the story of life and death. And the continuation of life. And in the cycle of things, as they are and as they are meant to be, there was equanimity and peace... Until one day, a fire raged and raged in the deep, green forest. And all the animals gave chase or took flight to try and save themselves from the inferno. While running away they felt huge despair at the thought of what they were leaving behind... their

only home. When they reached a safe distance some of the animals stopped to look at the raging fire, and noticed a small spot of red in the blue sky, circling back and forth, from a clear, cool lake to the blazing, burning forest... What was it? It was the red-throated hummingbird. And in her beak she ferried a few small drops of water to try to stop the fire. She flew back and forth, and back and forth, and back and forth again. The animals below looked up in amazement. The lion looked up, the elephant, the badger and the bear. They all looked up at the red-throated hummingbird in disbelief. And the lion roared: "Red-throated hummingbird, what do you think YOU are doing up there with your one drop of water?" Undeterred by the impossibility of it all, the little hummingbird said: "I am doing what I can."

The Hummingbird Story means, never give up. Any effort to help is an effort worth making.

Like the hummingbird, we each must do what we can.

Put 6 billion drops of water on the fire every minute of every day.

Imagine what we could do to build that better future to all Tamils that we all dream about.

Imagine!



Appreciation from a member in Victoria

I wish to congratulate the hard working team at ATC. Within a matter of a few months Tamils in Australia have regained their (nearly) unified voice and due recognition by our politicians and policy makers. Even during the height of our homeland crisis we couldn't find a single politician to lend a sympathetic ear. We were political orphans then. Today, things have changed. Your opinion and cooperation are sought from all sectors. Your spokesperson does a terrific job. ATC has truly emerged as the authentic voice of the Australian Tamils.

These are observations that I made as an outsider. I am not writing this just to bolster things. I am truly grateful for your efforts.

Keep up the good work

Dr Satish Nagarajah

Tamil Referendum Australia 2010

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The Vadukkoddai Resolution (VKR) is a landmark decision made by all Tamil political parties in 1976 to reclaim our traditional homeland and exercise our right to sovereignty. This is the culmination of the Tamil struggle for equality for over three decades before that time.

Fundamentals of VKR

1. The northern and eastern territory of the island of Sri Lanka is the traditional homeland of Eelam Tamils with centuries of history of its own sovereignty and independence before the advent of European colonialism;
2. The Tamil speaking people in the traditional homeland constitute a distinct nation, and Tamil speaking people living anywhere in any part of the island

and Tamils of Eelam origin living in any part of the world may opt for citizenship in their traditional homeland;

3. The Tamil Nation has the Right to Self-Determination;
4. The Eelam Tamils aspire for the restoration and reconstruction of the independent and sovereign state of Tamil Eelam.]

The following statement (of VKR) has been successfully ballot tested in Norway, France, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany and United Kingdom among the Eelam Tamils;

"I aspire for the formation of the independent and sovereign state of Tamil Eelam in the north and east territory of the island of Sri Lanka on the basis that the Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka make a distinct nation, have a traditional homeland and have the right to selfdetermination."

tion."

Diaspora Context:

The presence of the Tamil Diaspora in the host country is a direct consequence of the illegal unitary constitution of Sri Lanka (1972 and subsequent amendments), which has deprived Tamils of their nationhood in its constitution. Further, the VKR-1976, also clearly states that Tamils of Eelam origin, living in any part of the world, have a say in the nationhood and statehood of Eelam Tamils.

What can VKR-2010 Achieve?

- 1) Re-affirm the political aspirations of the Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka
- 2) Opinion of Tamil Diaspora can be used to determine the political solution to ethnic conflict
- 3) Result be taken to Governments and International bodies

4) Bring about National and global solidarity amongst Tamils, and bring consensus on the National question

Why do we have referendum now?

After May 2009, there is no functioning leadership in Eelam for Tamils. The duty to lead our nation has been passed on to the Tamil Diaspora. (This is because Diaspora is the only group of Tamil people with time, resources and most importantly political space to function as free citizens – and exercise their political will) Tamil Diaspora, in order to provide leadership, needs to assess the will of the people, as well as define the political fundamentals in a free and transparent manner - in a democratic way in a referendum.

Report from ATC Western Australia

There were no formal or advertised public activities during the last month but routine activities and discussions of significance continued to take place.

The most important routine activity was the contribution to the settlement of refugees from our homeland. Being closer to the Christmas Island, WA gets involved in the problems of the refugees in the Island and so do the ATC members in WA. Help was provided to those who came for treatment from the Island as well as to those who were moved as an

"overflow" from the Island. Perth Airport detention centre also hosts many from our homeland as Perth is the closest airport. ATC members visit and provide the "homely" support although the detention centre and the staff look after the refugees well in their custody. Refugees are taken regularly to the Temple, Churches and even entertainment centres. Still the refugees appreciate home food and home magazines. There are other refugees from other states who come in search of better opportunity. The two who came from

Queensland recently have found accommodation and also jobs. This is only healing the wounds of those who are able to escape the disaster in the homeland and there is much to be done to help those who are unable to leave the homeland or determined to stay there and fight for their historic rights.

The question of those who remain in the homeland was the subject of an informal discussion by members of ATC WA with MP, Dr. Dennis Jensen at our Rossmoyne centre which houses both the Ilankai Tamill Sangam and

ATC WA. The get together with Dr. Jensen who is sympathetic towards Tamils was pleasant and there was much discussion about "Human Rights" as well as the abuse of the words "Human Rights". One question was asked whether there is a "Bottom line" for what are called "Human Rights". Since there is no accepted meaning, anybody can be accused of violating "Human Rights" and anybody can claim to protect "Human Rights". During the discussion Dr. Jensen accepted the need to "CODIFY HUMAN RIGHTS" internationally. Dr. Jensen's understanding and support towards our cause is appreciated by our community.

Development and Context of Eelam National Liberation

By Ram Mohan

TNA and Diaspora should not make the same mistake again though the timeframe for the next phase of the Liberation struggle cannot be defined. The Presidential election 2010 has shown clearly that even semi devolution of power (not to mention recognition of the right of Self Determination) is unlikely by negotiation. Now that the sharing of spoils of war has been decided locally, the international powers will be concerned with their shares and not the well being of Eelam Tamils.

While Eelam National Liberation captures the emotions of most Eelam Tamils and even World Tamils, there are many outsiders and even some Tamils who do not have a clear understanding of it. Unless all the emotions resonate, they also could be counterproductive. Resonance in nature takes place when the induced frequency is the same as the natural frequency. In social life also, ideas become a material force if masses accept them as their own. This becomes possible only when Development of ideas match the Context. Both Development and Context imply Change.

If one avoids both ends to avoid speculation of the unknown, Evolution is a series of changes based on **survival** determined by **resistance**. It is a **cause and effect frame** and not a **time frame**. Evolution of man is based on **collectivism, language and technology**. When collectivism, language and technology interacted to reach an advanced mode of production called **capitalism**, evolution of **Nations** began. Thus a Nation is defined as a histori-

cal evolution of a community based on distinct territory, language, technology (economy) and culture. This period corresponded to about 12th, 13th centuries and it is to be noted that till about 1000 AD, earth's resources were enough to provide for independent individual or tribal living. The **Industrial Revolution** facilitated the development of capitalism and the **uneven distribution of resources** resulted in uneven development of capitalism. Stronger Nations captured weaker Nations including Eelam and Sinhalam to be exploited for obtaining raw materials and for selling manufactured goods. The **first phase of globalization** in the form of advancing **imperialism** was completed when the whole world was shared between the imperialist powers and the first and second world wars were about redistributing the colonies. The resistance to this globalization produced the Russian Revolution of 1917 which developed to the extent of being the major player in ending the Second World War. Added to this the emergence of China after the war was a warning bell to the imperialist powers and the "free for all" oppression became a conscious planned oppression.

Countries whose borders were drawn without any consideration to the Nations constituting those countries, were given "independence" often without a struggle as in the then "Ceylon" and political power was transferred to the dominant Nations of the countries while the economic power was retained by the imperialist powers. It is to be noted that imperialism has been divided with the political component mainly in the

hands of dominant Nations of countries with the economic component in the hands of the former imperialist powers. Thus the foundation was laid for the dominant Nations with State power and other Nations without State to enter into civil wars while the economic domination of the world continues with least resistance. Is it any wonder that the dominant Nations of India, Pakistan, China and indeed the entire third world develop a bond with the Government of Sri Lanka whose dominant Nation is Sinhalam? Is it not foolishness on the part of Eelam Tamils to expect justice from the Western governments who masterminded the conflicts in their own interest or from Delhi, Beijing and similar whose dominant Nations have oppressed other Nations in varying degrees? Of course these centers of power have contradictions among themselves and we need to make use of them but we cannot do that by tailing behind any power and more importantly we should have a strong friendly alliance with all oppressed Nations without State and other oppressed peoples.

The conscious plan for oppression by the imperialism did not stop with the above design alone. They knew that the power of the Socialist Countries (it was not Socialism but State Capitalism with better income distribution) need to be curtailed. They succeeded by undermining the bureaucracy of the Socialist countries by various carrot and stick methods and promoting the **Globalization of capital**. The dominance of the globalised capital is indeed the **second phase of globaliza-**

tion. Thus the "free market capital" of the imperialist countries joined hands with the State capital of the Socialist countries under globalised capital and during the first Iraq war, **a unipolar world was established and the Bipolar world of the cold war days was history**. A unipolar world with full of contradictions is unstable and by the time of the second Iraq war a multi polar world was emerging. The environmental crisis and the current economic recession have made the multi polar world **irreversible**. More of the multi polar powers are outside the West which is certainly a declining force. In a multi polar setting, we should have relationship with all powers but should not tail behind any power and certainly not behind the declining one. Also the neighboring power could be more dangerous due to proximity which the Vietnamese realized in time. But the multi polar setting is certainly good for the smaller ones and in particular to the Nations without State.

The Eelam National struggle started as a peaceful political resistance as soon as the Sinhalam began to exercise the political imperialism it got from the imperialists and demonstrated with depriving citizenship to one million Tamils and with the colonization of the Tamil homeland. The peaceful resistance was suppressed for 30 years violently by State terrorism and chauvinist hooliganism with regular racial riots ignored by the international community but intensifying all the time resulting in armed resistance. The armed resistance was initially a **reaction** to the chauvinist ethnic hooliganism and state terrorism and naturally the resistance had similar dimension but soon developed as a Liberation

Development and Context of Eellam National Liberation (Continued)

movement and the targets were confined to economic and military targets. However though this transformation placed the LTTE on the wrong side of the West and India, the reliance of the traditional Tamil political leadership on the West and India, gave the wrong impression of the Liberation movement to the rest of the world. A situation arose when the west and India banned the LTTE and stopped supplies while the rest of the world (though did not block supplies to LTTE) politically took the side of the government of Sri Lanka. Thus the Liberation movement became friendless in the external world except Diaspora (whose hands were tied) support and this led to the defeat of the LTTE by the government of Sri Lanka with the backing of 20 powerful governments.

TNA and Diaspora should not make the same mistake again though the timeframe for the next phase of the Liberation struggle cannot be defined. The Presidential election 2010 has shown clearly

that even semi devolution of power (not to mention recognition of the right of Self Determination) is unlikely by negotiation. Now that the sharing of spoils of war has been decided locally, the international powers will be concerned with their shares and not the well being of Eelam Tamils.

The Right of Self Determination of Eelam Tamils is naturally linked with the right of Self Determination of all Nations without State which are claimed to number around 3000 to 9000 but two hundreds and ten of them have been well documented in a book published by James Minahan (compare with 192 countries in UN). The recognition of the right of Self Determination of all Nations in the world is the next major Destination on the critical path (need to be achieved to move towards other subsequent Destinations) of civilization eliminating oppression of Nations by other Nations. However this does not eliminate other forms of oppression. National Liberation

is essentially a Political Process (guaranteeing political power to the Nation) to be followed by Economic Liberation ending economic oppression and establishment of a Socialist Society which is a further advancement in the interaction among Collectivism, Language and Technology. Further interaction would lead to Communism and Fellowship of beings and things leading to the contradiction free Destination of Merger as One, the ultimate expression of collectivism. Even if there are disagreements about subsequent Destinations including "ultimate" Liberation but if there is agreement about the nearest Destination we should unite with all such agreeable forces. If Socialists, Communists, Spiritualists including Liberation Theologists agree on the question of National Liberation, then we should develop unity and solidarity with all of them.

The immediate physical survival of Eelam Tamils (who are either IDP's or in open prison under occupation) and

the ultimate recognition of the right of Self Determination are twin priorities. The sixty year struggle of Eelam Tamils is silenced for the time being and it is the duty of the Diaspora to assist in reducing that "time being". The Diaspora is living in multicultural countries and has to fall in line with the laws of those countries but have a stake in the Eelam Tamil Nation as well as the Tamilnadu Tamil Nation (the only Tamil Nations in the world) because they are the sources of multi culturalism of the Diaspora. National Development and governance is possible only in these two Nations with territories historically. There is no room for transnational government but a strong and powerful world body is urgently needed. The GTF should fulfill this need and if those in charge cannot deliver, they should let others. If you can neither lead nor follow, please get out.

War crime probes call reiterated

BBC 12 February 2010

The United Nations have once again called for an independent international investigation over alleged war crimes in Sri Lanka.

Navi Pillai, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has told a gathering in Dublin, Ireland that her office is in a clear understanding that national investigations "have not worked so far". Speaking in Dublin, Ireland, she added that UN Secretary General Ban ki-Moon is "seriously committed to getting President Rajapaksa to comply with the undertaking

he gave to the Secretary General."

The High Commissioner confirmed that she recently met Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe in Geneva

HR minister

"It seems that everybody was waiting for the election to be over, and so that is what I reminded him," she said. The position that Sri Lanka has the unique office of a ministry for HR I thought places a particular responsi-

bility on the minister of HR should talk to his own government not only on post conflict rights violations but post election rights violations."

Expressing "disappointment" that the issue of alleged war crimes in Sri Lanka was not properly addressed at the UN HRC, she said it is an important vehicle on which states can take measures on rights violations of another country. Denying war crimes allegations, the Sri Lanka government says it will not allow any international investigations. In an interview with the BBC, Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa said he would not allow any such investigation

as "there is no reason." But the former military chief Gen Sarath Fonseka has said he will testify at an international hearing.



A new beginning for Canadian Tamils

Jonathan Kay , National Post

When people use the term "immigrant success story," they probably have someone like my friend Roger in mind.

Roger came to this country from Sri Lanka as a teenager. He had \$100 in his pocket, most of which he spent on a pair of sneakers shortly after getting off the plane. Eventually, he found a job at a major Canadian financial company, in the mail room.

That was a quarter-century -- and a half-dozen promotions -- ago. Roger is now a senior vice-president of that same multi-billion-dollar company. In airplanes, he's one of those well-dressed business class people you see thumbing their BlackBerrys, as you shuffle your way to coach. To his clients, his whole life probably seems like a glossy business magazine advertisement come to life.

But like a lot of Sri Lankan Tamils in this country, there's a troubled, guilty part of him that's still 14,000-km away. Troubled, because Tamils are a persecuted minority in Sri Lanka. And guilty, because not everyone he loved managed to escape, like he did.

Shortly before Roger left Sri Lanka, the army threw him in jail, suspecting him of membership in the Tamil Tiger insurgency. After a while, he was brought into a cell containing a man in a mask--a former Tiger who'd turned informant. As the Tamil prisoners were paraded past him, the informant would gesture up or down, indicating whether the prisoner was Tiger or not. On that basis, people lived and died.

Roger lived, but some of his friends didn't. To this day, he worries that he didn't do enough to help them. It's hard to enjoy the Canadian dream when your nightmares leave you racked with survivor's guilt.

This is just one immigrant's story. But it helps explain why so many newcomers to this country can't let go of life in "the old country" -- notwithstanding the casual exhortations to do so by native-born pundits like myself. Even the most patriotic and well-to-do immigrant can't erase from his memory the sound of screaming in the next cell. Among Tamil-Canadians, in particular, there are a lot of Rogers out there: Most of them fled

Sri Lanka in the 1980s, at the height of anti-Tamil pogroms, and still bear scars from the experience.

One unfortunate result of this is that Canada's Tamil community has come to be defined -- more than any other immigrant group, even Arabs and Jews -- by its attitude toward violence overseas. During the 1990s, in particular, Canadian Tamil activists often acted as apologists, and even fundraisers, for the hideous terrorist tactics employed by the Tamil Tigers. Once, I asked Roger how decent Tamils could defend suicide bombings. He thought about it for a second, and said: "When you've been brutalized for a long time, you eventually get to a point where you'll get behind anyone who can make your tormentors feel your pain. The Tigers are the only ones who can really hurt the Sri Lankan government."

That era is past, however. In 2009, after three decades of warfare, the Sri Lankan military cornered, and then annihilated, the last vestiges of the Tigers' forces, including their leader, Vellupillai Prabhakaran. It was one of the most decisive defeats of any insurgency in the history of modern warfare, and left

Tamil diaspora communities stunned with grief.

But for Tamils, some good may eventually come of this. Last Saturday, I attended the annual Canadian Tamil Congress dinner with Roger. Given the events of the last year, the mood was predictably sombre, especially since thousands of Tamils (including women and children) still languish in government camps. At the same time, though, there was none of the political tension that once existed between pro-and anti-Tigers constituencies, nor the simmering pain that comes from experiencing a faraway conflict by emotional proxy.

Roger and I talked about his business, and watched a troupe of women perform traditional Tamil dances. I met his wife, and he met mine. It was a normal, pleasant evening out, in other words, without the cloud of warfare hanging over the proceedings. Many immigrant groups take this state of affairs for granted. But for Tamils, it marks a completely new chapter in their Canadian experience.

jkay@nationalpost.com

Report from ATC Victoria

On 6 February, a group discussion was held in Vermont South for volunteers to help increase the membership number in Victoria. Around 50 people took part in this meeting at which Prof. Nirmalathas gave a summary of the various activities that have been taking place in the past 6 months in Victoria. The participants shared their view points in an open and friendly manner and showed a keen interest in assisting our planned future activities. An ATC brochure with most frequently asked questions was handed out to participants to help promote the membership drive. Many other ways of helping the ATC become the unified voice of the Tamils in Australia was discussed and various duties were assigned to the enthusiastic volunteers.

Sri Lanka soldiers remanded over rape of 9-year old Tamil girl

Courtesy of TamilNet ,

Six Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers were taken into custody for allegedly molesting a nine-year-old Tamil girl at Ki'raan Vaazhaichcheani in the eastern Batticaloa district, sources in Batticaloa said. The victim identified one of the perpetrators during an identification parade held in Batticaloa Magistrate Court. Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) reported that the soldiers of the Digiliwatiya camp had threatened the protesting villagers, and the body of one protester was recovered in a pond near the SLA camp after the protests.

The victim "was returning home in the company of two of her friends when soldiers bathing near a well chased after her and raped her. The girl was admitted to a hospital and the medical reports confirmed that she had been sexually abused. It is also reported that the girl who is still being treated at the hospital is being questioned constantly by commando officers," AHRC report said.

The alleged incident happened on the 12th of February. The suspects have been remanded by the Batticaloa Magistrate until 3rd of March, legal sources in Batticaloa said.

When the issue of rape by SLA soldiers was raised by US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, Sri Lanka's Defense Ministry website carried a refutation, saying "such sadistic allegations are far from the truth," and added that "there was no basis whatsoever even to suggest Sri Lankan forces had involved in such gross violence during its three-year humanitarian campaign."

British weekly, The Observer, in December 2009 said that "Tamil women interned after escaping the horrors of the civil war in Sri Lanka were sexually abused by their guards who traded sex for food," reporting on an interview with Vany Kumar, a British medic who was released from internment in September from the camps run by Sri Lanka military.

Systematic rape of Tamil women in custody and in areas under control of Security forces, and sexual abuse of LTTE women cadres caught during combat, had occurred from as early as September 1996 when Krishanthi Kumarasamy, a 17-year old highschooler, was murdered after being stopped and raped at an SLA sentry point at Kaithadi, Jaffna. Horrendous videos showing Sri Lankan soldiers abusing women cadres stripped naked have routinely surfaced," said activist for a Washington-based pressure group.

The link between maintaining international peace and security, and preventing and responding to sexual violence used as a tactic of war to target civilians was first laid out in last year's United Nation's Security Council resolution 1325.

United Nations charged 114 Sri Lankan soldiers who were on peace-keeping missions to Haiti in March 2008 with sexual exploitation and abuse against children. After an investigation into pending charges against Sri Lankan troops in Haiti, the UN's Of-

fice of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) concluded that "acts of sexual exploitation and abuse [against children] were frequent and occurred usually at night, and at virtually every location where the [Sri Lankan] contingent personnel were deployed."



Report of ATC South Australia

Sue Gilbey, Bremen Peace prize recipient 2009 has submitted a paper on SL Tamils issue to be presented on the 17th of Feb at the World peace Forum in Nepal. SA ATC assisted her with the preparation and proof reading of the paper.

Letters to PM, SA premier, Immigration Minister sent regarding the plight of boat people at Merak to coincide with Community Cabinet meeting held in Adelaide in February.

Copy of the above letter was sent to Circle of Friends Adelaide, who are following this up by writing letters to the PM and local MPs.

Meeting was also undertaken with the Australian Refugee Association (ARA) with regard to general issues involving the refugees as well as the people at Merak.

As an ATC Women's group initiative, Letters have been sent to members of the executive committee of UNIFEM seeking assistance to start projects in the NE Sri-Lanka to help the women affected by war. No response has been received as yet.

Report from ATC Queensland

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

ATC Queensland Chapter participated in the following refugee/asylum seekers and human rights advocacy forums:

11th of February - Refugee Inter-Agency Group Forum – The Refugee ‘Push’ Factors; “What are the choices when there is no turning back?” held at ‘Bleeding Hearts’ Café and Gallery, Brisbane CBD.

12th of February - Refugee Action Collective - Asylum seekers ‘Speak Out’ organized at the Brisbane CBD.

19th of February - ALP / Union Forum - Organised by Runcorn Kuraby & Waterford ALP Branches and hosted by Evan Moorhead MP- Sri Lanka A way forward for all the people. Dr Sam Pari, Director Communication and Media of ATC was one of the panel member who addressed the targeted audience who were mainly ALP/Union members. Other key speakers included Queensland Sen. Claire Moore and Maree

Klemm, President Amnesty International Queensland and Northern NSW. The event was coordinated by David Forde, ALP, National Delegate.

The above participations are viewed as important opportunities for improving partnerships between ATC, and advocacy groups in the state in influencing the tenor and direction of Australian responses to refugee and humanitarian crises affecting Tamils in specific and other affected groups in general.

REACH OUT TO REFUGEES

A number of reach out activities were approved at the last Chapter meeting to integrate new arrivals with the rest of the Tamil community in Queensland.

GTF FORUM

A representative from QLD Chapter will be part of an ATC delegation that will participate at the Global Tamil Forum (GTF) meeting to be held between 23rd to 25th of February in London, UK, where Tamil Diaspora representatives from 15 countries are expected to discuss the ‘Ways Forward’ on Tamil issues at the current geo-political environment.

GTF meeting is an opportunity for the ATC to put forward issues of concern and proposals to the peak international Tamil body mandated to lead and coordinate international action to protect and resolve Tamils rights issue in Sri Lanka



Fresh charges against Fonseka & elections

The Sri Lankan government on Thursday made it known that fresh charges would be framed against the defeated opposition common consensus presidential candidate, retired General Sarath Fonseka, in civil courts under the Penal Code and Exchange Control Act in two weeks.

Minister of Export Development and International Trade G.L. Peiris told a news conference here that the former Army Chief would be charged on counts of fraud, condoning fraud, plotting against the government, creating unrest within the Army and keeping army deserters under his protection.

General (retired) Fonseka is in the custody of the military on a number of charges including treason.

The commander-turned-politician was picked up on the night of February 8 after a raid on his election office by a group of military personnel. The raid and the subsequent detention triggered a furore within and outside Sri Lanka.

One of the allegations faced by General Fonseka is that he had favoured the company partly owned by his son-in-law in award of contracts for defence supplies to the Army.

The CID had informed the local courts that when he was the Army Chief, the General had approved of four suspicious tenders to a firm allegedly run by his son-in-law Dhanuna Tilekeratne.

AUSTRALIAN TAMILS REFERENDUM ON VADDUKKOADDAI RESOLUTION REGISTRATION FORM FOR VOTERS

STATE OF REGISTRATION NSW VIC QLD ACT SA WA NT TAS

A ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- 1) Are you
- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a) an Australian citizen? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| b) a Permanent / Temporary Resident? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| c) a Student / Visitor / Refugee: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

If you are a visitor, how long have you been in Australia: _____

- 2) Are you 18 years or over by 17/04/2010? Yes No
- 3) a) Born in Ceylon/Sri Lanka and has Tamil as their mother tongue? Yes No
- OR
- b) have a spouse who was born in Ceylon/Sri Lanka and has Tamil as his/her mother tongue Yes No
- OR
- c) Descendants of the above categories a and b. Yes No

Note: you may require producing evidence of above (Birth certificate or passport)

B PERSONAL DETAILS ◆ Must be completed

◆ Surname:

◆ Givenname:

◆ Address: **Number and Street Name**

Suburb State Post code

Contact: Phone Number

Email Address

DOB and / or age: Would you like to register for postal vote: Yes No

I hereby declare that the above information about me is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature _____ Date

C OFFICE USE ONLY (TAMIL REFERENDUM COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA)

Verified by: _____ Date: _____ No:

Additional documents needed: Yes No

If yes what are the documents _____

**Please send the completed form to P O Box 4061, Homebush, NSW 2140
or Email to registration@vkr1976.com.au**

Q+A - Sri Lanka to face loss of EU's GSP+

By Shiraz Aneez

Sri Lanka on Tuesday said it was prepared to face a European Union withdrawal of its preferential trade benefits that helped to boost the island nation's garment exports to the 27-nation bloc.

Following are some questions and answers on the EU trade concession and the possible impact if it is lost.

WHAT IS THE EU GENERALISED SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES PLUS (GSP+)?

It is a special incentive scheme for sustainable development and good governance, offering tariff cuts to support vulnerable developing countries in ratification and implementation of international conventions in these areas.

WHY IS THERE A POSSIBILITY OF SRI LANKA LOSING GSP+?

An EU probe has found Sri

Lanka in breach of international human rights laws. Western diplomats say it will be very difficult for Sri Lanka to come back from losing it at this stage.

WHY DOES IT MATTER FOR SRI LANKA?

Sri Lanka is one of 16 countries with GSP+ status. Garment exports, the country's second foreign exchange earner after remittances, have benefited substantially with a 6-7 percent concession, and the EU has been the main buyer.

The value of the benefits has been estimated at 100 million euros (\$136 million). Losing GSP+ means EU buyers will have to pay more for Sri Lankan exports, thus the exporters lose price competitiveness and market share.

IS THERE ANY WAY SRI LANKA COULD GET GSP+ RENEWED?

If Sri Lanka could address the concerns of the EU in the next six months, there is a possibility.

Diplomats say some of those concerns include settling the remaining more than 80,000 displaced from the 25-year war against Tamil Tiger separatists and ensuring media freedom.

Sri Lanka has said it is ready to engage with the EU to address the concerns raised by the bloc, asking that "unattainable targets" be avoided in any talks.

Sri Lanka has already taken steps, like releasing a majority of the 288,000 war displaced and granting bail to a journalist sentenced to 20 years of hard labour after he wrote articles critical of a military offensive against the rebels.

WHAT DOES LOSING GSP+ MEAN FOR THE SRI LANKAN ECONOMY?

Closure of small and medium-

scale garment firms, job losses, mainly among the rural poor women, and a decline in global investor confidence would be among the consequences, including a decline in post-war foreign investments.

Economists say there may be pressure on the \$40 billion economy's fiscal and trade balances, if there is a significant decline in export revenue after losing the GSP+.

The central bank has said exporters will still be competitive after the loss of the scheme due to depreciation of the currency against the euro and British pound. But garment exporters say their buyers have already signalled a move away from them to lower price garments.

(Editing by Ron Popeski)

Sri Lanka's Jayasuriya sets sights on parliament

Sri Lanka's top runscore in one-day international cricket is going to contest the forthcoming parliamentary elections scheduled for 8 April.

Sanath Jayasuriya, now retired from Test cricket, told the BBC Tamil service he will stand in the southern district of Matara, where he was born. He will be standing for the Sri Lanka Freedom Party of President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

Jayasuriya played a key part in Sri Lanka's only World Cup victory in 1996.

Another top Sri Lankan cricketer, World Cup winning captain Arjuna Ranatunga, stood in the 2005 elections and went on to become a minister. But he fell out of favour with the ruling establishment and is now contesting April's election as an opposition candidate.

'Personal decision'

Sanath Jayasuriya, 40, is standing in Matara district, where he also went to school.

"I know the area well. This place needs development. I am going to help the people," Jayasuriya said. "I have already campaigned for the president in the last elections. He requested me to contest this election. I thought long about this. Then I have decided to contest. It is a personal decision," he added.

If the voting in the presidential election is anything to go by, the chances of the dashing left-hand batsman winning the election are very high.

Jayasuriya said he would continue to play one-day internationals (ODIs) and in the Indian Premier League.

The Hon John Murphy's speech at the parliament on 4 February 2010



Today is the 62nd anniversary of Independence Day in Sri Lanka.

However, the Tamils on the island will not be celebrating—indeed, the Tamil diaspora around the world mourn as they believe today marks the beginning of national oppression. On 4 February 1948, when independence was granted by the British government, arrangements were not made to secure political stability through a power-sharing agreement between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority. Due to this failing, the minority Tamil community were repeatedly discriminated against and brutally oppressed. The Tamils sought non-violent means of action, engaging in political campaigning for federalism through constitutional and parliamentary means. However, the Tamil community report that the vocalisation of their desire for self-determination led to a violent reaction from the Sri Lankan government resulting in a bloody 26-year civil war.

On 29 May, the government declared victory with the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The end of the war resulted in some 300,000 internally displaced persons being forced into government

camps. Heavy military artillery and shelling obliterated homes and schools as well as hospitals. In a United Nations report, it is estimated that in the last stages of the civil war 20,000 Tamil civilians were killed, mostly through shelling; 7,000 civilians were killed in the so-called no-fire zone up to the end of April, despite assurances from the Sri Lankan government that they had stopped the use of heavy weapons. On average, a thousand civilians died each day until 19 May 2009.

Despite the Sri Lankan government's declaration of victory, the international community has expressed its grave concern that this battle will not be won and peace will not prevail until the Sri Lankan government provides essential political reform. Unfortunately, the recent re-election of the Sri Lankan President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, has not instilled confidence in a secure future for all Sri Lankans. On the contrary, the Tamil community I represent have raised their serious concerns that the elections were not conducted in good faith. Rather, they believe the elections were brought forward two years to exploit the Sinhala majority in order to gain another six-year term. Further, the Tamil community believes that the voting trend highlights the alarming polarisation between the Tamils and the Sinhalese, noting that the majority of Tamil-speaking people voted against re-elected President Rajapaksa. A UNICEF representative presented a report on the current situation in Sri Lanka to senators and members in this House this morning. He confirmed that many Tamils were unable

to register to vote at the recent elections. The opposition presidential candidate, General Sarath Fonseka, has also alleged that there were serious violations of electoral law and has requested the electoral commissioner to annul the voting.

The current political and humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka is extremely disturbing. Despite a commitment from the Sri Lankan government to resettle all of the 300,000 internally displaced persons by 31 January this year, the UNICEF representative noted that this has not happened and will be unlikely to occur in the next couple of months. While many people will celebrate Independence Day today in Sri Lanka as I speak, some 90,000 internally displaced persons remain in government camps unable to return to their homes. Landmines and unexploded ordnances are making vast regions too dangerous to access. Others have no homes to return to as they have been destroyed by shelling. Alarming, it was also reported by the UNICEF representative this morning that there are currently no mother and child health clinics, no paediatric care and no obstetric services available in the affected areas. While Australian children have just begun their school year, returning to improved or improving learning environments due to federal government funding, many schools in northern Sri Lanka have been reduced to rubble. It is reported that every school that was not destroyed or severely damaged does not have furniture or teaching resources. The trauma suffered by the men, women and children in northern Sri Lanka, which they continue to experience, is nothing short of horrific. The

Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations has continued to raise its request for an independent investigation into the conduct of all parties during the war.

On 16 January this year, in Dublin, the Chairman of the Permanent People's Tribunal, Francois Houtart, delivered the preliminary findings of its two-day hearing in Milan on the war and its aftermath. Evidence

including video footage and eyewitness accounts was presented during the hearing. The people's tribunal found that the Sri Lankan government was guilty of war crimes and guilty of crimes against humanity. Previously in this House I have called for an independent and thorough international investigation into the reports of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Sri Lanka. On the 62nd anniversary of Independence Day in Sri Lanka, I repeat that call for an independent investigation, led by the United Nations, and I demand that the Sri Lankan government cooperate fully with that investigation.

Australian Tamil Congress

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In the past, only a fraction of Tamils have participated in politically active groups. Today the need is for a united and concerted action. We need to draw the silent majority and fresh blood into political awareness to convey the collective view of our community effectively.

We have some major projects and we cannot succeed without membership numbers and the funds that can generate! We are aware that a strong membership base is paramount to have a viable platform to make an impact. We earnestly request your help at this critical time to join our efforts. Being member of ATC, you will be entitled to participate in various ATC working groups and influence the direction.

You can contribute in various ways to our long-, medium- and short-term activities in humanitarian, legal, political, community, and communication fronts.

Please join us in our crusade for peace and justice by having your family and friends join ATC!

Articles to the National Newsletter

Please send us your views and creations to be included in our Newsletters to

newsletter@australiantamilcongress.com

Australian Tamil Congress: On a Crusade for Peace and Justice

Vision

“Australian Tamil Congress is formed in order to create a congress of our people, for our people and by our people based on the principles of justice and peace amongst ourselves, and to provide for a common voice in promoting our general welfare, prosperity, independence, equality, security and peace”

Mission

“The Australian Tamil Congress encourages the positive participation of Tamils in Australian society, highlights issues of importance to Tamils, upholds core Australian values and engages other communities, governments and organisations in addressing the socio-cultural and political concerns of Tamils.”

Objective

“As part of an international Tamil human rights and political organization dedicated to generating change through ‘Collective Global Tamil’ action to institute and educate people on Tamils’ right to survival and self-determination, and to promote the safety, welfare, economic development of Tamils worldwide; and to teach the lessons of the Tamil Genocide in Sri Lanka for future generations.”

