

Sri Lanka: Inmates lack basic needs

Tuesday 21 July 2009, by [KARUNARATNE Vickramabahu \("Bahu"\)](#) (Date first published: 19 July 2009).

While the refugee camps are exposed as veritable prison camps, suspected for deliberate elimination of Tamil people, international pressure on the Mahinda regime has increased. Even presidential adviser Vasu has come out strongly against the happenings in these camps. Perhaps the victories that he has won in important court cases has given him Dutch courage (hope it is not a racist remark!) to stand against the regime of his bosom pal. In any case the miserable condition of refugees has become a human tragedy, and it is claimed to be nothing less than a living hell. Not even half the requirement of drinking water is available. Around 6000 children are suffering from malnutrition while 1000 of them are in urgent need of medical attention.

The chauvinist JVP which opposes the recognition of Tamil nationality or a Tamil homeland and advocated an oppressive war, started on 13 July "we have to accept the fact that they are suffering; they lack water; sanitation and food and the government is not doing enough to rectify this situation". In addition to this the 13 plus too has become a vexing problem for the Mahinda government. It is burning any brainpower left within the ranks of the government. The 13 plus has become the next hurdle for Mahinda to overcome. On the one hand, the chauvinist elements within the government, such as Wimal and Champika, are campaigning openly against any kind of devolution.

Federalism

On the other hand, all Tamil leaders including those who loyally backed the government war efforts have put forward federalism as the minimum requirement to solve the problem. India and the world powers are impatiently awaiting its implementation. While the UNP is non committal, the JVP has come out strongly against even the 13th amendment.

If the so- called proposals of the APRC comes out, there will be a clash of opinion that might even penetrate the military and organized trade unions. In the end it could lead to violent clashes that can develop into a new civil war in the south.

Mahinda is aware of this and wants to avoid such a situation ever occurring before the presidential elections. He knows if he supports a 13 plus with power over police, land, water and energy, the chauvinists will break away and might put forward a separate chauvinist presidential candidate. Somebody suggested that it could be General Sarath Fonseka! Such a candidate may garner a crucial 5 to 10 % of the vote. That would be enough to knock Mahinda off in the first round.

In order to avoid that calamity he wants to go for elections first, so that chauvinists Wimal, Champika and probably Tilvin will be compelled to campaign for Mahinda against all opposition candidates.

Having fooled them, once in power he could disregard their protests and go for devolution as requested by his masters in Delhi and western capitals. Thereafter he will be the most loyal agent of global capital in carrying out their agenda. In order to avoid any disfavour from the armed forces, he has already given glamorous positions to the top commanders. General Sarath Fonseka is made a glorified second in command for two more years. All the others have been either kicked up or kicked

out into foreign embassies. That is to neutralize any pressure coming from the military elite. However, all this is very fragile. Tamils being kept behind barbed wires under inhuman conditions is a time bomb. Local and international campaigns may accelerate to put the country at the centre of international news, again. It will be against the regime without “anti terrorism” to counter balance the pressure on the government.

The division on the 13 plus may occur within a few more weeks to separate the Left from the chauvinists. The so- called war against terror is no more there to bond Vasu and Wimal together. the agitation of the plantation workers for Rs500 per day can become a powerful force that could ignite the urban worker.

If it gets going, no Sinhala national hero could counter it, because the pain of hunger and dissatisfaction is everywhere. In the recent past, it was momentarily has been pushed aside by victory celebrations and expectations of freedom and leisure by the people. Can Mahinda control it until the December presidential elections?

P.S.

* From lakbimanews column, 19 July 2009.