



Click to enable Adobe Flash Player

Wednesday, 6 May 2009

NEWS BAR » U issues strict guidelines ...

Sports: Jakati shines ...

HOME  
DAILYNEWS  
ONLINE

| SHARE MARKET | EXCHANGE RATE | TRADING | PICTURE GALLERY | ARCHIVES | Google

- News
- Editorial
- Business
- Features
- Political
- Security
- Sport
- World
- Letters
- Obituaries

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

OTHER LINKS



## The case of Tissanayagam and response to President Obama

Tissanayagam is in the news again. This time, no less a person than US President Barack Obama has included Tissanayagam's name in the statement issued by him on World Freedom Day.

Possibly, President Obama had been misinformed by the officials to include the name of Tissanayagam in his statement on World Freedom Day (May 3).

Sadly, the statement was made at a time his (Tissanayagam's) high court trial is proceeding where the prosecution has closed its case after leading the evidence of 12 witnesses and the defence is leading the evidence presently.



Tissanayagam has been indicted under the Prevention of Terrorism Act

In an admissible confession, accused Tissanayagam had admitted his links with the LTTE.

The confession was admitted in evidence at the court trial. There was material that showed his close links to Sivaram alias Tharaki one time editor of Tamilnet.

Tissanayagam was associated with several opinion making publications of the LTTE organization and was part of their propaganda outfit and was instrumental in securing funding for LTTE publication. He has also links with prominent personalities of the LTTE.

The process by which Tissanayagam was brought to trial shows it was attended to without any delay. This was possible because of the nature of the evidence against the accused. Tissanayagam was arrested on March 07, 2008.

Tissanayagam was indicted by the Attorney General on August 11, 2008. High Court trial commenced on September 9, 2008.

The indictment is filed on the satisfaction of the Attorney General that there is sufficient evidence to indict an accused. As the dateline revealed the accused had been swiftly brought to trial.

[News](#) | [Editorial](#) | [Business](#) | [Features](#) | [Political](#) | [Security](#) | [Sport](#) | [World](#) | [Letters](#) | [Obituaries](#) |

It is likely the advisers to President Obama had not disclosed to him the evidence against the accused and the swift manner in which he was brought to trial and the strength of the evidence against the accused.

If these facts were made known to President Obama, he may not have included the name of Tissanayagam.

### Background

In this context, it would be appropriate to face before public the background to his arrest. First of all, it is necessary to point out the legality of the process of investigations, the arrest and the subsequent legal action taken.

The Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (1977) recognizes freedom of speech, expression and publication as fundamental rights of

all citizens of the country. This in turn gives the constitutional recognition and protection to media freedom in the country.

However, like any other country in the world, Sri Lanka too imposes pro bono restrictions on the exercise of freedom of expression, speech and publications. This is simply because of the possibility that this freedom can be misused for many purposes, including damage to the nation's solidarity.

Therefore, freedom of media in Sri Lanka is subject to the legal restrictions imposed in the interests of racial and religious harmony, with regard to parliamentary privilege, contempt of court, defamation or inducement to an offence, and some others too considered necessary for the good of society.

The media does not operate in a vacuum. In Sri Lanka it operates in an environment of a civil conflict that has been going on for decades. It should be noted that in the context armed hostilities, the belligerents could use the media as an effective weapon to carry out psychological warfare and propaganda against each other.

When it comes to unconventional warfare, such as terrorist warfare; psychological operations and propaganda operate in extremely subtle form that it becomes a laborious task to differentiate between true media work and mendacity of propaganda.

Terrorists usually lure people who are already work in the media through money or other benefits or attractions, to make them to carry out propaganda work using the platform of the mass media.

These media willing or unwilling agents of terrorism always appear to act as independent journalists and some even as the self-proclaimed crusaders of media freedom to prevent disclosure of their true motives.

Due to these circumstances, Sri Lanka has categorized misuses of the freedom of speech, expression and publication including media freedom by terrorists as offences under Prevention of Terrorism Act (1979). Therefore, any person who causes or intends to cause violence, or racial or religious disharmony or feeling of ill will or hostility between different communities by his/her words, spoken or by any other way of expression, is a terrorist.

Propaganda elements of LTTE terrorists of Sri Lanka use a threefold strategy to carry out their operations. They promote communalism among the Tamil Diaspora around the world, justify the LTTE's terrorism and persuade Tamils to fund the terror outfit.

On the other hand, they spread fabricated stories on the human rights situation in the country and attempt to bring international pressure against the Government fighting against terrorism. They adopt a defensive strategy to avoid them being cracked down by the law by acting as some kind of crusaders of media freedom in the country.

These self-proclaimed media freedom fighters often file reports full of invective, quoting various incidents of what they call "attacks on independent media workers". These reports invariably contain false facts related to the quoted incidents or expose only the half-truths to support the hidden agenda of their originators.

The following report filed by defence.lk exposes the true facts in the case of Tissanayagam.

Tissanayagam is the only recognized journalist who has been taken into custody on suspicion of having connections with terrorist activities, by the Terrorist Investigation Department (TID) of the Police. March 6, 2008, the TID raided two neighbouring offices at a Shopping complex of Kotahena, down Jampettah Street on reliable information that the LTTE had been running a press and a web-based propaganda institute there.



US President Barack Obama

During the raid it was found that a press owned by one Jaseekaran had been running under the name E-kuality Graphics Private Ltd, at No 12, Jampettah Street, Colombo 13. The next-door office at No 12, was that of Outreach Multimedia Private Ltd.

TID initially took Jaseekaran and Miss Valarmadhi into custody. Later, on the information revealed during the investigations, Tissanayagam was taken into custody on March 7, 2008.

#### **Snowballing effect**

The arrest of Jayaprakash Tissanayagam and his accomplices was shown to the world as the Government's arbitrary arrest of a group of independent journalists. The suspect's long-time hobnobbing with various foreign funded NGOs and his career as a journalist gave a snowballing effect to the story.

Many international civil rights groups, foreign embassies, INGOs without making a slightest effort to verify the facts have started sending heaps of letters to the law enforcement authorities to release the suspects.

According to the statement made by Tissanayagam, he had come into close terms with known LTTE propagandist Dharmaratne Sivaram alias Taraki while he had been working for the Sunday Leader in 1999.

#### **Spreads out ideologies**

Together with Taraki, Tissanayagam had toured the Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Vavuniya areas where the LTTE was then very active. Taraki was the editor of Tamilnet, the LTTE's official mouthpiece on the Internet, and known to be the mastermind behind the all-Goebbelsian propaganda of the outfit that spread out its tribal ideologies. As a result of this connection with Taraki, Tissanayagam had quit the Sunday Leader and started a pro-LTTE magazine named North Eastern Herald with Taraki in 2002.

Tissanayagam further stated that he had joined North Eastern Herald because it drew lot of foreign funds and therefore he found it to be very profitable to work there. An office affiliated to the Switzerland Embassy named SIDA had been its main financier.

The directors of the company formed to carryout the publication were, Dharmaratne Sivaram, Shivakumar, and Yuvialan Thangarajh (A lecturer at Eastern University ). The magazine had been published up to November 2005, until SIDA stopped funding to the company.

The main objective of making money through foreign aid for which the company was started was no longer achievable. According to Tissanayagam, a person named Karuniyan Arulanandan had agreed to provide funds to keep the company alive but failed in his part.

What was interesting about the above mentioned business venture was that it was carried out mainly to draw foreign funds and seemed to have no any intention of becoming a self-financing business.

Its main business, the publication of the magazine too had no market penetration but was mainly published as an opinion maker in favour of the LTTE at international forums. Like many such organizations run by foreign funds, the business made easy money for the people involved and ceased to exist as the financier turned its back. This is the bitter truth of many bogus rights activists in this part of the world.

### **New venture**

In 2004, the main suspect of the case, Vetrivale Jaseekaran had come to meet Tissanayagam and proposed him to start another venture that can draw a good amount of foreign funds. According to Tissanayagam, he had come to know Jaseekaran via another journalist in 2000, during one of his tours to Batticaloa.

Consequently, a company named Renaissance Publication and Guarantee Limited had come into operation under the directorship of Jayeparkash Tissanayagam, Vetrivale Jaseekaran, Kathiravale Vignashwaran, Balasubramaniam Wasanthan alias Shivakumar, Rohitha Bhashana Abeywaradane, Sathasivan Baskaran, and Vadivelu Valarmadhi. The company had started its office at No 82, Bandaranayake Mawatha, Colombo 12 and started publishing a pro-LTTE magazine- North Eastern Monthly since February 2004.

The North Eastern Monthly had been published under the direct guidance of LTTE and its content therefore had been aimed at subtly promoting tribal and sectarian ideologies championed by the LTTE. It has been found that LTTE had directly funded the organization through its agents in Colombo.

In early 2006, Tissanayagam together with Jaseekaran had started another company named Outreach Multimedia Private Ltd. According to the evidence revealed so far, this new company had been started at the behest of the LTTE with the aim of carrying out internet-based propaganda for the terrorist outfit. The company directors were Tissanayagam, Jaseekaran and another individual named Terald Abeygunawardane. The last individual, Terald Abeygunawardane is currently in hiding to avoid police arrest.

After starting the new company, Tissanayagam and the team had made a proposal to another INGO named FLICT with the aim of finding much desired foreign funding. As per the evidence, the company had made a written proposal to the INGO requesting Rs. 2.3 million in 2006 to start a fully equipped web- based media organization. However, for some unknown reason the INGO had not considered the proposal serious enough, and had not been very quick to release the funds. As a result, the disheartened entrepreneurs had lost their interest on the new project but continued their activities in the Renaissance Publication and Guarantee Ltd.

In mid 2005, Tissanayagam had come into close contact with a hardcore LTTE cadre called Baba. On the instruction of Baba, Tissanayagam had met LTTE heads in Kilinochchi at least twice in 2005 and 2006.

The North East Monthly had been published every month during 2005-2006 periods adhering to the guidance provided by the LTTE. As the evidence had started to pile up, Tissanayagam admitted that Baba had given him money for publishing the magazine.

However, Tissanayagam had testified that he had refused the money offers made by Baba saying that someday the police may track him down. The TID had found that Baba had deposited Rs. 50,000 at least on three occasions at an account that belonged the Renaissance Publication, at the Hatton National Bank, Kotahena.

Finally in early 2007, Tissanayagam seemed to have got cold feet of drawing direct funds from a terror outfit and stopped publishing the propaganda magazine in June 2007, as the company could not find any other source of funding.

Thereafter, Tissanayagam had joined another INGO named ITI (One Text Initiative), established for "peace building" in this country in 2007. During this time, he had also worked as a freelance journalist for The Sunday Times.

However, responding to the early request made by the Outreach Multi Media, the INGO, FLICT had suddenly decided to provide Rs. 950,000 to Tissanayagam and the team in early 2008. With this sudden fortune, the team of directors had reorganized themselves and re- launched the website [www.outreach.sl](http://www.outreach.sl).

It can be reasonably suspected with the available evidence that Tissanayagam had obtained money from LTTE knowingly that it is a terrorist organisation. Also, it is worthwhile to note that Tissanayagam had received the payments of which the TID has substantial proof, during a time when the LTTE was carrying out many civilian massacres, bus bombings, train bombings etc.

If Tissanayagam was a responsible citizen, he could have come to the police and revealed the information he knew about the terror agents in Colombo. However, the possibility cannot be ruled out that Tissanayagam was actually another individual like those free media fighters who had been lured by the terrorist outfit exploiting his greed for money. This possibility comes to the surface when looking at the profile of Jaseekaran, the main suspect of the case.

Tissanayagam has been indicted under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the case is being heard at the courts.

**(Courtesy: Defence.lk)**

 [EMAIL](#) |  [PRINTABLE VIEW](#) |  [FEEDBACK](#)