

Press Communiqué of the NDP

6th April 2005

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Party released on 6th April 2005 a press communiqué objecting to the proposed Upper Kotmale Hydro Power Project. The communiqué stated that fertile plantation land, human settlements and a large portion of Talawakelle town face inundation following the proposed construction of dams in Talawakelle and Caledonia in the Hill Country, in connection with the Upper Kotmale Hydro Power Project. The project will have adverse environmental consequences, and will badly affect the people of the Hill Country. Therefore the New Democratic Party vehemently condemns the measures taken by the government in its eager pursuit of implementing the Upper Kotmale Project, which would be a bad precedent not merely for the Hill Country but for Sri Lanka as a whole. The Party also gives its fullest support and co-operation to the people's campaign of opposition demanding the abandoning of the Upper Kotmale Project.

The communiqué further added that it has become customary for the two ruling class parties that have come to power in this country to act against the Hill Country Tamils while ruling the country with the support of the trade unions and parties of the Hill Country Tamils. Some of these political parties have completely sold themselves out. The Upper Kotmale Scheme was earlier carried forward under the UNP government and now under the UPFA government. The project is to be implemented using a massive loan from Japan. The truth that, while a large sum will be payable to Japan as interest, the 150 MW of electricity generated by the scheme will be used for the purposes of two Japanese companies to be set up in the Hill Country has been hidden from the people.

Meanwhile an area including several hundred acres of fertile plantation land, human settlements and a large portion of Talawakelle town face inundation. Promises of compensation, alternative housing, development and alternative employment will, as in the past, be mere deception and eyewash. Besides, planned chauvinistic colonisation and establishment of military bases will also be a consequence of the project. Above all, the Upper Kotmale Scheme is one of several ventures to sell the natural resources of the country to foreigners and lead the country to disaster. Moreover, it should be noted that geoscientists have warned that the dammed reservoirs that already exist in the Hill Country and the proposed Upper Kotmale Scheme would make the region more vulnerable to earth tremors and environmental changes.

Therefore, considering the interests of the country and its people, the New Democratic Party will give its fullest support and co-operation to the people's campaign of opposition demanding the abandoning of the Upper Kotmale Project.

Press Communiqué of the NDP

25th April 2005

Comrade E Thambiah, National Organiser of the NDP released a press communiqué on 25th May 2005 in which he called upon the entire people of the hill country to mobilise in the Revolutionary May Day Rally of the NDP to be held in Ragala, in order to build up people's power to put an end to the Upper Kotmale Project, to win a fair increase in wage for the plantation workers, to achieve a political solution to the national question, and to overcome imperialism, which is the basis of the problems, and to strengthen the alternative democratic joint political leadership of the Hill Country Tamils with participation by the people.

The communiqué added that the NDP is holding demonstrations and rallies in Jaffna and Ragala and that the demonstration emphasising a political solution that will ensure equality of the nationalities and autonomy on the basis of the right to self determination will commence at 10.00 a.m. from the Thirunelveli Junction, Jaffna and proceed to the Jaffna Co-operative Society Auditorium, the venue of the meeting. Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the Party, will chair the meeting.

The revolutionary procession in Ragala will commence at 10.00 a.m. at the Ragala Nadukkanakku Bazaar Street and proceed to the venue of the meeting in Ragala. Comrade E Thambiah, National Organiser of the Party, will chair the meeting.

The security of the plantation workers and of the entire Hill Country Tamil people now faces an unprecedented threat. Their future is uncertain. The disastrous Upper Kotmale Project has become a major threat. It has been demonstrated that the leadership of the trade unions and the parliamentary political parties of the hill country are incapable of defending the people against these threats.

Hence, a democratic joint political leadership with participation by the people is the most suitable for the people of the hill country. The Party calls upon all to unite for the common purpose of reinforcing such a political leadership based on the working class as nurtured and developed by the NDP and to mobilise in the Revolutionary May Day Rally in Ragala.

Press Communiqué of the NDP

27th April 2005

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Party released on 27th April 2005 the following May Day Statement on behalf of the Central Committee of the Party.

It befits neither the UPFA government led by Chandrika Kumaratunga, which is dragging its feet without setting up the Joint Mechanism for the North-East while allowing the prices of essential goods soar sky high and speedily implementing privatisation, nor the JVP, which is stirring up chauvinistic fanaticism while cloaking itself in red, to celebrate May Day. Thus, the working people and the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamils who are subject to oppression should mobilise on this May Day to make a militant call against the anti-people anti-national policies of the UPFA government.

It is a year since the UPFA government came to power. It is four months since the tsunami disaster. President Chandrika Kumaratunga proudly boasts she has occupied the seat of the executive presidency for ten years. But the issues of negotiation and political solution for the national question, which was transformed into a cruel war, remain unresolved in any respect. All efforts for a solution and the expectations of the people have been cast aside. In the end, it was expected that a joint mechanism would be set up to deal with the tsunami disaster and the losses suffered by the people of the North-East will be rectified through restoration, rehabilitation and reconstruction. That too is being cynically procrastinated. The JVP, which is mouthing chauvinistic venom, has been instrumental in causing the delays. The JVP, which has thus demonstrated that it is not a left party, is in fact a chauvinistic party cloaked in red. Meantime, the prospect of the notion of a political solution to the national question based on the principle of self-determination becoming a sacrificial lamb at the altar of Indo-US rivalry is clearly visible. The US and India, which acted indirectly to complicate the national question, are today acting openly to serve their political and military interests.

It is in this context that privatisation is being quickened and the resources of the country are being robbed. The UPFA government is taking steps to privatise the remaining state enterprises such as electricity, petroleum, water, education, rail transport and banking. It is to implement the environmentally disastrous Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project in the hill country and the Nuraicholai Thermal Power Plant in Puttalam. Meanwhile, the country is left wide open to imports to the ruin of our agricultural production and the pauperisation of the peasants who are driven to suicide. The Chandrika government is following the path chartered by the World Bank, the IMF and the Asian Development Bank. The steps taken by the government are plunging the country into imperialist globalisation. Thus, the working people and the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamils who are subject to oppression should mobilise on this May Day to make a militant call against the Anti-people anti-national policies of the UPFA government.

The May Day processions and rallies of the NDP will be held in Jaffna and the hill country.

Press Communiqué of the NDP

10th June 2005

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Party released on 10th June 2005 a press communiqué on behalf of the Politburo of the Party in connection with the crisis concerning the Joint Mechanism (P-TOMS).

The communiqué stated that a monthly increase in fuel price has now become standard and, as a result, prices and fares are increasing without restraint and the people are struggling to survive in the face of the rising cost of living. The JVP, while maintaining silence about this abject economic condition of the people, is mouthing slogans about patriotism and national welfare and whipping up frantic chauvinistic fervour against the Joint Mechanism. Meanwhile the Buddhist clergy who preach non-violence have gone on hunger strike against the setting up of the Joint Mechanism, that is intended to provide relief for reconstruction and rehabilitation to the people of the North-East who suffer great burdens of loss caused by the tsunami. Besides the consequent emergence of a political crisis, the country is also being pushed into a situation of communal disharmony and turbulence. Under these conditions, it is essential that the president does not retreat in the face of opposition and, as promised by her earlier, proceed to set up the Joint Mechanism in collaboration with the LTTE. The NDP emphasises that the setting up of the Joint Mechanism will, besides enabling the provision of relief to the victims of tsunami in the North-East, be a forerunner to the resumption of the long stalled negotiations for the resolution of the national question.

The communiqué added that the outbursts and hunger strikes by the JVP and the Jathika Hela Urumaya regarding the Joint Mechanism proposed by the President with the consent of the LTTE are neither to save the country nor for the salvation of the people. It is for the resumption of war to plunge the country in a bloodbath. It is in the vain hope that they could capture state power by such means. The JVP leadership, which has been a partner in power for an year, enjoying ministerial positions and accompanying perks, have not uttered a word about the crises of life faced by the people on a daily basis or about the ruination of the country by liberalisation, privatisation and foreign infiltration. But they swear that they are willing to sacrifice their lives in the cause of preventing the setting up of the Joint Mechanism to provide relief to the tsunami victims in the North-East. The president, for the sake of saving the lives of one or two Buddhist priests on hunger strike, should not abandon the Joint Mechanism to serve the people of the North-East who are in a desperate situation, after having lost tens of thousands of lives.

Meantime, the UNP should abandon its opportunist line of 'stirring the pond to catch the fish', with the presidential election, the parliamentary election and the next government in mind. It should abandon saying one thing at a time about the Joint Mechanism, contradicting itself each time. At the same time, if the UNP is sincere towards the Tamil people, it should support the Joint Mechanism about which there is consensus between the President and the LTTE. The question is whether it will do so.

The NDP wishes to point out that if the President will, in setting up the Joint Mechanism, act with firmness and courage to overcome the emerging opposition, she will be writing a fresh chapter in the annals of the history of this country that has been tarnished by chauvinism and secure a unique position for herself; otherwise she will be the victim of the old route and drag the country once more into the mire of war.

The NDP emphasises that it is the bounden duty of all left and democratic forces and all who are desirous of peace to give their fullest support to the setting up of the Joint Mechanism.

Revolutionary May Day of the NDP in the North and the Hill Country

On 1st May 2005, the NDP conducted its May Day processions and rallies in the north and in the hill country.

In the north, the Party had its May Day in Jaffna town. The May Day procession originally scheduled to proceed from Thirunelveli Junction was curtailed under LTTE pressure and started from Sathiram Junction and arrived at the venue for the rally. Slogans raised during the demonstration included “Workers of the world unite; let us struggle against globalisation!” “Let us oppose oppression!” and “Grant the Joint Mechanism!”

Comrade K Kathirgamanathan chaired the May Day rally, which was addressed by the Party General Secretary, Comrade SK Senthivel and Central Committee members, Comrades K Thanikasalam and S Thevarajah, Comrade P Murugesu on behalf of the Youth League, trade union representative K Panchalingam, M Thiagarajah, former Northern Region Chairman of the Ceylon Teachers’ Union and others.

In the Hill Country, the May Day procession and rally of the Party were held in Ragala. The procession started at the St Leonard’s Bazaar and proceeded to the venue of the rally at Ragala Bazaar. Slogans raised during the demonstration included “Stop forthwith the Upper Kotmale Project!” “Are the bogus development schemes to eliminate the Hill Country Tamils?” and “Grant the plantation workers their pay rise!”

National Organiser of the Party, Comrade E Thambiah chaired the May Day rally, which was addressed by Comrade S Panneerselvam, Hill Country Regional Secretary of the Party, Comrades V Mahendran, N Varathgarajah, educationist S Rajendran and several others.

27th Anniversary Celebration of the NDP

The New Democratic Party celebrated its 27th Anniversary in Hatton on 3rd July 2005. A very well attended public meeting and a cultural programme were conducted in the Sakthi Hall, Hatton. Comrade E Thambiah, National Organiser of the NDP chaired the meeting and Comrade SK Senthivel delivered the Anniversary Address. Comrades Sarath Fernando (Railway Workers Union), S Jeyaseelan, K Kathirgamanathan, K Mahendran, S Panneerselvam, S Rajendran (Educationist), S Sathiyamoorthy, J Satkurunathan, K Thanikasalam, S Thevarajah, and other leading comrades also addressed the meeting. Comrade N Varatharajah introduced the speakers.

The cultural programme included street theatre, revolutionary songs and folk dance and music, and the movie, Motorcycle Diary, depicting a part of the life of Ché Guevara.

[A translation in summary of the address by Comrade Senthivel is included in this issue of ND.]

Call by the Hill Country Committee of the NDP

(The following is a translation of a Tamil leaflet distributed by the Hill Country Committee to mark the occasion of the 27th Anniversary Celebration of the NDP held in Hatton on 3rd July 2005.)

People of the Hill Country, what is the alternative?

Any decision that is not taken on the basis of the long-term needs and the interests of the people will in the end harm the people. Because of the failure to prevent the transfer of plantations from the state to the private sector workers have lost the rights and privileges that they once enjoyed. The plantation economy has been wrecked by schemes such as those for potato cultivation and horticulture. As a direct result, the plantation workers and people who relied on the plantation economy for their livelihood have been badly affected. Today the trade unions are in a situation in which they are unable to speak up against oppression by the plantation companies. The members of parliament also remain silent. Some limit their bravado to press releases.

Although it is said that legislation is in place for solving the citizenship issue in full, the Hill Country Tamils have been denied their rights in several matters including the registration of names in the voter’s register.

The Hill Country Tamil nationality has not received the full benefits from institutions such as the Pattana Sripada College of Education, the Teachers' Training College and the Thondaman Technical Training Institute.

Even the *grama sevaka* officials appointed to serve in the Tamil medium are unable to function in Tamil.

Besides these, acts of national oppression, such as planned chauvinistic settlements and hydropower schemes and racist attacks have rendered the Hill Country Tamils unprotected. Although historical experience has taught many lessons, the so-called leadership of the Hill Country Tamils comprising the CWC and the Hill Country People's Front have failed to take a firm and defiant stand.

The leaders of the hill country are only interested in obtaining the votes of the Hill Country Tamils and thereby secure posts and portfolios and concessions for themselves from the parties that form the government. They have made it their politics to live at the mercy of chauvinistic capitalist parties. Their holding ministerial posts in oppressive governments has not led to any serious change in the living conditions of the people.

Contesting elections, entering into alliances with chauvinistic governments and running the trade unions in ways that suit the big plantation companies is neither the politics of the Hill Country Tamils nor the politics for the plantation workers.

The politics of the nationality and the plantation workers is the politics of mass struggle. It is the only way in which the Hill Country Tamils and the plantation workers could secure their existence. Such politics will not be carried forward by organisations such as the CWC and the Hill Country People's Front.

The New Democratic Party has made calm and steady progress along the path of mass political struggle the past 26 years. It has carried forward on several fronts ideological struggles as well as mass struggles based on the demands of the Hill Country Tamils for their rights. It conducts election campaigns too as struggles for winning these rights. Even when it wins the elections it will still be carrying forward struggles to secure the rights of the Hill Country Tamils and the plantation workers. There will be no compromise or surrender in dealings with the chauvinists and the capitalists.

The New Democratic Party has carried forward mass struggles against the chauvinistic attacks in Wevalwatte and Kandapola, the Bindunuweva massacre and mining for gems in the plantations, and in support of an increased wages for the plantation workers. Currently, it is carrying forward major struggles against the Upper Kotmale Project.

It has supported many struggles in the hill country and lent its fullest support for the struggle of the trainee teachers at the Pattana Sripada College of Education.

Thus the New Democratic Party has determined that the alternative political path for the Hill Country Tamils and the plantation workers is the path of mass political struggle and continues its journey along that path. It is ready to struggle on its own as well as in unity under a common programme with other parties, trade unions and mass organisations.

The New Democratic Party on the occasion of its 27th anniversary calls upon all political parties, trade unions, mass organisations and individuals to come forward to unite under a common programme to win the rights of the Hill Country Tamils and the plantation workers.

Hill Country Committee of the NDP
10th June 2005
Ragala