

BHUTAN

People without a Home



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The South Asia Conflict Monitor (SACM) aims to provide in-depth analyses, country briefs, summary sketches of important players and a timeline of major events on issues relating to armed conflicts, insurgencies and terrorism. It also aims to cover the government's strategies on conflict resolution and related policies to tackle these risks and crises.

The South Asia Conflict Monitor is a monthly bulletin designed to provide quality information and actionable intelligence for the policy and research communities, the media, business houses, law enforcement agencies and the general reader by filtering relevant open source information and intelligence gathered from the ground contacts and sources

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People without a Home: Bhutanese Refugees and Third Country Rehabilitation

Despite the fact that a large number of Bhutanese refugees are rehabilitated in seven countries— the US, Australia, New Zealand, Netherlands, Norway, Denmark and Canada— the issue still haunts the country. The seriousness of the issue came to the international community's notice while the same was discussed again between the prime ministers of Nepal and Bhutan on the sidelines of BIMSTEC in March 2014. During the meeting, Nepalese Prime Minister Sushil Kumar Koirala stressed on early repatriation of elderly Bhutanese refugees from Nepal since young people have resettled in different countries. The Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay in response said: "We will see". Since Tobgay had not given any clear response to Sushil Koirala's proposal, perhaps Bhutan may not be interested in the repatriation of the remaining refugees living in Nepal. As a result, the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, known as 'Lhotsampas' will remain citizens of a second country forever. Although the numbers of the remaining refugees are small, the issue has the potential to affect bilateral relations between Bhutan and Nepal in future, given the decision of some refugees to return to Bhutan.

The issue has been a major irritant between Nepal and Bhutan since the mid-1980s. Both the countries have already discussed this issue some 15 times, without any results. Surprisingly, the Nepalese often accuse India for not helping in resolving the issue, while India treats the issue as a dispute between Bhutan and Nepal. Around 100,000 Bhutanese refugees fled the country through India fearing for their lives after the Bhutanese government introduced new citizenship rules. Although Bhutan has never rejected the repatriation of these refugees, it has agreed to the repatriation of 'only' properly verified genuine citizens of Bhutan. According to the Bhutanese government, most of these refugees are 'migrants' and have no right to live in Bhutan.

The Nepalese PM's discussion on the issue was very important but no solution was found over the resettlement of around 16,000 refugees. Unless they are repatriated or resettled elsewhere, the problem will persist. Nepal's prime minister might have thought of requesting Bhutan to at least allow the elderly people to be repatriated who do not pose a serious challenge to Bhutan's demography, security, culture, and political stability.

Nepal wants to get rid of the decade-old problem and improve bilateral ties looking beyond this issue, since both the landlocked countries face many similar challenges for their economic development. Most importantly, during the insurgency many refugees reportedly had joined the Maoists' rank and file in Nepal. There is a fear in Nepal that the remaining refugees may indulge in anti-national activities in future with the support of radical factions of the Maoist parties in Nepal.

According to UNHCR, out of a total of 108,000 refugees, 83,000 are rehabilitated in third countries and around 25,000 are waiting for resettlement or repatriation. According to a reliable source indicated that of these 25,000, around 9,000 have already agreed to be resettled. Among the remaining 16000, half of them are elderly and infirm people and others are not interested in third country rehabilitation due to business interests or other factors. They would prefer to either repatriate or settle in Nepal and India. The elderly refugees have reportedly formed a Senior Citizens Group to campaign for repatriation. They have also set up a registration process for those wanting to be repatriated. More than 8,000 refugees have shown interest for that. Therefore, since the number is very small, Bhutan should not have any problem in repatriating the remaining refugees.

Interestingly, while the former Thinley government was willing to repatriate only bonafide Bhutanese living in the refugee camps in Nepal, the present government is completely against it. Responding on the issue in 2012, the present prime minister said, "Repatriation is no longer possible. Repatriation of some people was a genuine possibility 10 years ago, but even then, only if the verification process was honest and complete."¹

Moreover, there are mixed responses to third country resettlement. Elderly persons are against it. Some younger refugees also subscribe their elders' view. Even after third country resettlement they feel responsible to extend support to their relatives to fight for repatriation to their homeland. There are possibilities of extending moral and monetary support to the refugees living in Nepal to press for early repatriation to Bhutan. There are also reports that those who have rehabilitated in other countries are not happy. Some in fact committed suicide after rehabilitation in US. According to a report called "An

¹ "Repatriation still a far cry", Bhutan News Service, Jul 29, 2013, <http://www.bhutannewsservice.com/interview/repatriation-still-a-far-cry-in-bhutan/>

Investigation into Suicides among Bhutanese Refugees in the US 2009 – 2012”, around 19 persons were committed suicide until October 2012. The rate of suicides among US-resettled Bhutanese refugees from our study was 20.3 per 100,000, higher than both the global rate and the US rate of 12.4 per 100,000.

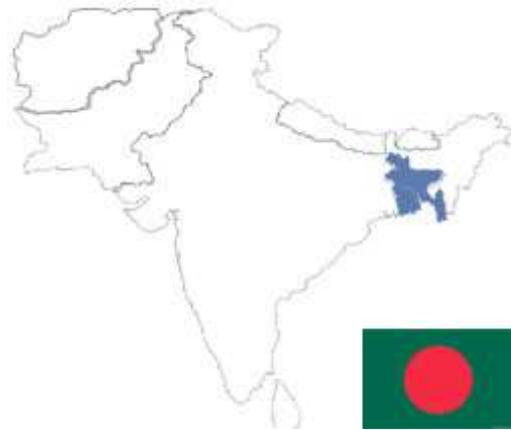
Any early solution on the refugee issue between Nepal and Bhutan is unlikely at this moment, given the Bhutanese government’s cold response. Therefore, multiple options for the resolution of the issue look bleak and finally the onus lies with the UNHCR and the international community. The UNHCR may convince some more Western countries to share the burden with free medical aid and pension support for elderly refugees and job opportunities after resettlement. This offer may attract the remaining refugees.



COUNTRY ROUND UP

BANGLADESH

The country witnessed relatively less violent conflict and street demonstrations. However, political killings continued. Both the opposition and the government accused each other for such killings. The main opposition party was looking for an opportunity to begin a fresh round of street demonstrations to mobilise international support in an effort to prove that the AL government does not carry popular support. Although the BNP indirectly declared street demonstrations in the month under review, it failed perhaps due to its strained relations with the Jammata. The relationship is yet to become normal since the end of the parliamentary elections. Moreover, the opposition parties are waiting for the war crime trial to begin this month to kick start demonstrations against the ruling coalition.



The political rivalry and associated rhetoric reached new depths when the Prime Minister herself tagged the rival BNP as an illegal organization that was 'founded by a military ruler who had seized power illegally'. With this, the political tensions in Bangladesh will take a new shape in the coming months and surely with the start of war crime trials. Before that the BNP would like to mend the differences with Jammata. The BNP-led opposition will try to highlight fringe international issues like the Teesta water issue with India, and the killing of Bangladeshis in India. Besides, the opposition would raise the issue of attacks on BNP cadres by both security forces and ruling party members in the country.

Major Events

April 03: Six Jama'atul Mujahedeen Bangladesh (JMB) militants arrested in connection with the February 23 ambush on the security convoy and the rescue of three JMB militants (two of them on death row) in Trishal, Mymensingh, were placed on a 10-day remand and police filed two cases against them - one under the Explosive Substances Act and another for rescuing three militants, ambushing a police van and killing a Constable in Trishal. (Daily Star, April 3, 2014).

April 07: Seventeen activists of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) were sent to jail for vandalising shops and vehicles and obstructing police from performing their duties at Atwary, Panchagarh district in October 2013. The procession was part of the BNP-JeI's countrywide demonstration to mount pressure on the Awami League government to

form a Caretaker Government for holding the 10th parliamentary elections (Daily Star, April 07, 2014).

April 10: The detective branch of the Bangladesh police arrested three militants of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) along with explosives in Dasherhat, Kurigram district. The militants were identified as Anwar Hossain, second-in-command of the JMB, and Zobed Ali (Zubaer) and Monowar Hossain Biplob. Police indicated that militants were planning to carry out sabotage on the Pahela Boishakh (Bengali New Year) celebration programme (Daily Star, April 10, 2014).

April 12: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed said that the rival political party, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) 'is an illegal organization founded by a military ruler who had seized power illegally'. While addressing the newly elected Upazila Parishad representatives she further added: "It is unfortunate for the people of Bangladesh to hear theories from those who have been illegal. The higher court has declared illegal the rule of Zia-ur Rahman who grabbing power illegally and formed his party BNP. So, a party formed by such an illegal grabber of power is also illegal"(Dhaka Tribune, April 12; UNB Connect, April 12, 2014).

April 16: The Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) has intensified its demand of unconditional release of its deputy chief Delwar Hossain Sayedee, by urging people to raise their voice against the Government's 'plots' against Sayedee. The International Crimes Tribunal-1 (ICT-1) condemned Sayedee to death for his crimes against humanity during the Liberation War (Asia Post Bangladesh, April 16, 2014).

April 21: Nearly 20 people, including policemen have been injured during a clash with Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) operatives in Natore. JeI-ICS cadres were protesting against the alleged government's conspiracy to execute JeI chief Motiur Rahman Nizami and deputy chief Delwar(Hossain Sayedee on charges of crimes against humanity during the Liberation War (Daily Star, April 22, 2014).

April 23: Five cadres of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), the student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) were arrested in Maijdee, Noakhali district for their involvement in subversive activities (The Independent, April 24, 2014).

April 29: Nearly 20 suspected militants affiliated to a group called Kalema Dawat were arrested from Bapta Pilot area of Bhola district. The arrestees are from different areas of Satkhira, Narsingdi, Noakhali and Bhola districts. Md Akram Hossain, one of those arrested, said they are the followers of 'Kalema Dawat' chief Prof Abdul Majid and came to the village to invite people to join their party (Daily Star, April 30, 2014).

April 30: Eight suspected operatives were arrested by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) in connection with the February 23 incident of killing of a policeman and rescuing three condemned Jamatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (Bangladesh Chronicle, April 30, 2014).

INDIA

India began the process for elections to the 14th Lok Sabha across the country in the first week of the month. Many rebel outfits called for boycott of elections and some of them took undue advantage of security forces deployed in their region for elections purposes. Out of three major conflict theatres – Jammu & Kashmir, Maoist affected central-eastern region and the North-east, the Maoists had initiated



maximum attacks on the security forces as part of their poll boycott programme. The Maoists also hinted at a truce before the beginning of the elections by laying down five conditions and asked the government to recognise it as a political movement. Around 22 persons including some security force personnel were killed in three major Maoist attacks in the month. Most of the attacks took place while the election teams were engaged in poll-related activities. Four provinces – Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Bihar and Jharkhand witnessed maximum anti-election campaigning by the Maoists.

After the Maoist-affected states, J&K witnessed maximum poll-related violent incidents. The militants tried their best to disrupt the campaigning and also the polling. For example, around 14 persons were injured in an explosion near the venue of an election rally to be addressed by ruling National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah on April 27. That was the second such explosion during the day to disrupt the rally.

The rebel groups in the Northeast also boycotted the elections. However, the region witnessed less violence which may be due to elaborate security arrangements and prior peace negotiations with many rebel groups.

Major Events

April 6: The CPI-Maoists called for a truce by laying down five conditions and asked government to recognise their movement as a political movement. In a statement, Abhay, spokesperson of the CPI-Maoist central committee, said the party was not against peace talks with the government (The Hindu, April 7, 2014).

April 7: The Communist Party of India (Maoist)'s Darekasa area committee, under North Gadchiroli-Gondia division of Maharashtra, campaigned against the Lok Sabha polls through banners and posters. The Maoists had called for boycott of the polls on April 10 (The Times of India, April 7, 2014).

April 8: A Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) and two militants were killed, while four policemen were injured in an encounter between security forces and militants in Kralpora, Kupwara district in Jammu & Kashmir (Deccan Chronicle, April 8, 2014).

April 10: Two paramilitary personnel were killed and three others injured in a Maoist attack, when they were on way to a polling station in Jamui parliamentary constituency of Bihar (Indian Express, April 10, 2014).

April 12: Around 15 people, including six Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel and nine civilians, were killed when Maoists blew up an ambulance and a bus in two separate incidents in Bastar region of Chhattisgarh (The Times of India, April 12, 2014).

April 14: Assam Rifles personnel killed two militants at Phungyar in Ukhrul district of Manipur during a fierce exchange. Two AK 47 rifles and ammunition were seized near the bodies (The Hindu, April 14, 2014).

April 24: Five police personnel and three polling officials were killed when suspected Maoists targeted the bus in Dumka district of Jharkhand. Ten people were injured in the attack. The incident occurred when an IED placed under a bridge went off as the bus was passing it (Indian Express, April 25, 2014).

April 25: Four militants of the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) were arrested during a combing operation in Imphal east district of Manipur. More than 50 militants have so far been arrested by security forces this year in Manipur (Daily News and Analysis, April 25, 2014).

April 27: Around 14 persons were injured in an explosion near the venue of an election rally to be addressed by ruling National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah. Some unidentified persons threw a hand grenade causing the explosion. This was the second such explosion during the day to disrupt the rally (Hindustan Times, April 27, 2014).

April 29: Indian police claimed to have busted a major terror network with the arrest of a 37-year-old Sri Lankan, Sakir Hussain, allegedly linked to an ISI suspect, in Chennai. Hussain has been tasked by a senior official in the Pakistan High Commission in Colombo to recruit youths from south India, especially Tamil Nadu, for terror activities (Times of India, April 30, 2014).

April 30: Three National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) insurgents were killed in a gun battle with security forces in Assam's Sonitpur district. Three pistols, a grenade and incriminating documents were seized from the incident spot (Times of India, April 30, 2014).

NEPAL

Political stalemate continues in Nepal after six months of the second Constituent Assembly elections. Both the Maoist factions, for the first time since their split in June 2012, came together to oppose the government for arresting of Maoist cadres, who indulged in crimes during the insurgency. They argued that these cases should be tried under the Truth and Reconciliation



Commission (TRC). The Baidya faction in fact warned to forming a parallel government and launching a strident protest if the government does release arrested party members. The UCPN (Maoist), another Maoist faction, obstructed the parliament session demanding the release of 13 of its members, against whom a chargesheet had been filed. Meanwhile, the first draft of the TRC bill was opposed by civil society and the international community for mentioning the grant of amnesty to the offenders. After a series of debates on the TRC issue, the Nepalese parliament endorsed the bill.

Despite this, drafting of a new Constitution would be difficult due to absence of consensus on other contentious issues. Further delay in the process may lead to ethnic unrest in future.

Major Events

April 15: CPN-Maoist chairman Mohan Baidya warned of forming a parallel government and launching a strident protest if the government does release arrested party cadres. He demanded that the government stop arresting the party members on the charges of criminal offences allegedly committed during the insurgency (Setopati, April 15, 2014).

April 16: The UCPN (Maoist) obstructed the parliament session demanding the release of 13 of its members against whom a chargesheet has been filed for their alleged involvement in the murder of one Krishna Prasad Adhikari in 2004 (Ekantipur, April 17, 2014).

April 19: Leaders from the UCPN (Maoist), some Madhes-based parties and the Federal Socialist Party Nepal (FSPN) have agreed to forge a 'strategic alliance' and jointly lobby for their agenda with regard to Constitution-drafting, the peace process and on other fronts as well (Republica, April 20, 2014).

April 21: CPN-Maoist chairman Mohan Baidya has claimed that the new Constituent Assembly (CA) will also fail to produce a new Constitution ensuring people's rights and that his party will announce a pro-people statute from the streets (Republica, April 22, 2014).

April 25: Parliament endorsed the bill on Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission on Enforced Disappearances, ending seven years of debate and tug-of-war on some key provisions proposed in the bill (Republica, 26 April 2014).

PAKISTAN

Uncertainty prevailed over extension of the ceasefire from the Pakistani Taliban conglomerate Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The TTP took time to decide on it because of internal resistance to the peace talks, security forces' attacks on some TTP factions despite the ceasefire and factionalism in the TTP. TTP's Mohmand agency chief Omer Khalid Khurasani hinted that it would not accept any extension in the ceasefire because of continuous



violation of the same by the security forces. After long introspection, on April 16, the TTP announced its opposition to the extension of the ceasefire. It however, kept its option open for dialogue in case complete sincerity and seriousness was shown by the government in future. After the end of the ceasefire, there were escalations of militant attacks in various places including Karachi. Meanwhile, more than 50 TTP members from two factions were killed in a clash between the Khan Said alias Sajna and Waliur Rehman groups of the TTP.

Immediately after the end of the ceasefire, the National Security Council convened a meeting which was chaired by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to assess the implications of the development. There were already differences of opinion between the government and the Army on the issue of peace talks with the TTP.

While the peace talks were going on with the TTP, Balochistan witnessed increase in violence. The Baloch rebels felt that the government has neglected them while taking initiatives for peace talks with the TTP. To put pressure on the government, the Baloch rebels attacked trains and other infrastructure. For example, around 16 civilians were killed and 40 wounded in a blast on a train at Balochistan's Sibi railway station by the Baloch Army. In retaliation, the government forces launched a massive operation against them. The Frontier Corps claimed to have killed more than 30 militants in Kalat and Khuzdar districts of Balochistan in the operations. Although the TTP has hinted its acceptance for the dialogue process, it would be difficult for the TTP to generate consensus on the issue in future. Any development on that front depends on Hakimullah Mehsud's domination in the TTP and reconciliation between Khan Said alias Sajna and Waliur Rehman, which is unlikely to happen. Further, the Baloch Army will continue its attacks to put pressure on the government for dialogue.

Major Events

April 02: Three persons were killed and two women were injured in a firing by unidentified gunmen in Quetta, Balochistan province. No militant outfit has claimed responsibility for the attack (Dawn, April 2, 2014).

April 3: Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) said it has yet to decide about extending the ceasefire as some of its members were opposing the extension. Alleging continuous violation of ceasefire by the security forces, TTP's Mohmand Agency chief Omer Khalid Khurasani said it would not accept any extension in the ceasefire (The Nation, April 3, 2014).

April 7: The Frontier Corps (FC) claimed to have killed more than 30 militants in Kalat and Khuzdar districts of Balochistan. Khan Wasey, the spokesperson for FC said the forces launched an operation against suspected militants in Kalat district's Parodh area who were allegedly involved in recent attacks on passenger trains, security forces and other vital installations in different parts of the province. Kalat and Khuzdar are considered to be the most sensitive districts of Balochistan (Dawn, April 7, 2014).

April 7: Four Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants, including a key commander, were killed in the Shaktoi area of South Waziristan tribal region. The attack was allegedly part of a clash between the Khan Said alias Sajna and Waliur Rehman groups of the TTP (Dawn, April 7, 2014).

April 8: Pakistani intelligence agencies alerted the police that the militant outfit Ansarul Hind may carry out attacks in Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta to derail the government-TTP peace talks. It is suspected that the Ansarul Hind was affiliated with the Al Qaeda (Dawn, April 8, 2014).

April 08: Around 10 militants are killed in a fresh clash between two groups of the TTP in Shaktoi area of South Waziristan. The clashes between Khan Said alias Sajna and Waliur Rehman groups of the TTP began on April 6. The total death toll in the clash stood at 15. (The Nation, April 8, 2014).

April 8: Around 16 civilians were killed and 40 wounded in a blast on a train at Balochistan's Sibi railway station. The United Baloch Army claimed responsibility for the attack (Dawn, April 8, 2014).

April 8: Around 14 persons died in intra-party feuds in Miramshah. (A total of 34 people have now been killed since fighting broke in the Waziristan tribal district between supporters of Khan Said Sajna and followers of the late Hakimullah Mehsud (Daily Times, April 9, 2014).

April 9: With the killing of nine more people in the TTP's intra-party fighting, the toll has reached 43 (Daily Times, April 10, 2014).

April 12: According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) nearly 30,000 members of the Hazara community (Shia) have migrated in the last five years from Balochistan to other parts of the country. HRCP official said that the flow of migration increased as nearly 1,000 members of the Hazara community have been killed in targeted attacks since 2009. Members of the Hazara community leaving Quetta and other parts of the province comprise businessmen, highly educated workers and senior government officials, amongst others. The official also said that more than 10,000 Hindus have fled Balochistan province as abductions-for-

ransom have become routine over the last three years (Express Tribune, April 12, 2014).

April 16: The Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) formally announced that they have decided not to extend the ceasefire. It however, kept the option open for dialogue with complete sincerity and seriousness. The Taliban conglomerate had declared a month-long ceasefire on March 1 and later extended it for 10 days. (The Nation, April 17, 2014).

April 25: At least four persons were killed and 20 others injured in an explosion that took place near a mosque in Delhi colony area of Karachi. Pakistan information minister said that there had been an escalation in such incidents after the expiry of ceasefire announced by the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) (Dawn, April 25, 2014).

April 30: Around five militants were killed and three others were injured in a remote controlled blast in the Shaktoi area of South Waziristan. The incident was a continuation of the ongoing infighting between rival factions of Taliban, the Sajna and Shehryar Mehsud groups (Dawn, April 30, 2014).

SRI LANKA

Immediately after the passage of the resolution on UN resolution on human rights violations and crimes, Sri Lanka signed the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373, which sets out strategies to combat terrorism and to control terrorist financing. As a result, the Sri Lankan government banned the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and 15 other Tamil Diaspora groups that are alleged to have



terror links and are involved in reviving the terrorist movement in the country. The government reports also indicated that the LTTE has been trying to revive the movement in the North with the support of LTTE leaders Nediyanwan and Vinayagam based in Europe.

The country may witness communal violence with the increase of trust deficit between ultra-rightist Buddhist groups and Muslims. The Tamil minority may also face harassment from security forces in the name of taming the LTTE sympathizers.

Major Events

April 1: Sri Lanka signed the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373, which sets out strategies to combat terrorism and to control terrorist financing. With this, the Sri Lankan government banned the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and 15 other Tamil Diaspora groups that are alleged of having terror links and involved in reviving the terrorist movement in the country (Colombo Page, April 1, 2014).

April 8: Sri Lanka refused to cooperate with the inquiry to be conducted by the office of the UN Human Rights High Commissioner Navanetham Pillay as mandated by a UN resolution on human rights violations and crimes by both the government and the LTTE during insurgency from 2002 to 2009 (Colombo Page, April 8, 2014).

April 8: Sri Lanka proscribed 16 pro-LTTE organizations and froze their assets. The ban was imposed under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373, which sets out strategies to combat terrorism and to control terrorist financing. Sri Lanka signed the resolution on April 01, 2014 (Colombo Page, April 8, 2014).

April 10: The Sri Lankan police arrested 65 persons in March 2014 under suspicion of attempting to resuscitate the LTTE (Colombo Page, April 10, 2014).

April 10: A clash between Sri Lankan security forces and suspected LTTE operatives in Vavuniya area in the north reportedly killed four people including an Army soldier. The security forces in a search operation for the wanted LTTE suspect Gopi, had clashed with suspected LTTE operatives in the Nadunkarni area of Vavuniya. (Colombo Page April 11, 2014).

April 12: Sri Lanka's military authorities said there is a renewed attempt to revive the LTTE in the North to launch another phase of its struggle for a separate state. It said the local group was functioning under the instructions of Europe-based LTTE leaders Nediyanan and Vinayagam (Colombo Page, April 12, 2014).

April 17: A Mahanayake Thero (Chief Prelate) in Sri Lanka threatened to take to the streets with the Maha Sangha over the government's failure to amend some land laws (Colombo Page, April 17, 2014).

