

Texas A&M The Battalion

82 No. 193 USPS 045360 6 pages

College Station, Texas

Wednesday, August 13, 1986

Sri Lankans aid to get to Canada

2 seek status as refugees

ST. JOHN'S, Newfoundland (AP) — The 152 Sri Lankans rescued in two crowded lifeboats drifting on the Newfoundland coast paid up \$5,000 apiece to be smuggled into Canada, officials said Tuesday.

The Sri Lankans, whose lips were swollen and burned from exposure, were picked up in fog-shrouded waters six miles southeast of the coast Monday afternoon by three fishing boats. They are asking to be classified as refugees.

They were brought to St. John's Tuesday morning aboard the fisher patrol vessel Leonard J. Crowley. Local officials told their story with the aid of an interpreter.

At a news conference at the local Canadian coast guard headquarters, Canadian Mounted Police Inspector Jack Lavers said the refugees are Tamils who claimed to be fleeing persecution on their troubled island off the southern tip of India.

Tamils account for 18 percent of Lanka's 16 million people and have complained of discrimination by the Buddhist Sinhalese majority. Tamil militants are waging a guerrilla campaign for an independent homeland.

More than 160,000 Sri Lankan Tamils, who are mostly Hindus, have fled in the past three years. About 130,000 have gone to India, while the others are scattered across Europe, North America and the Middle East.

Lavers said the 144 men, three women and five children found themselves on the two unmarked lifeboats apparently boarded a freighter off the coast of India on July 7 after being an Indian agency between \$10,000 and \$5,000 each for the passage.

He did not know how they got to Sri Lanka to India. He said police believe the ship was off the Sri Lankans at the first port of Canadian land and then retreated into international waters so not to be caught.

He said efforts to find the ship would begin when the fog lifted and the captain and crew could be charged with conspiracy to violate Canada's immigration act.

The refugees said they did not know the name of the freighter, but they boarded at night, were put below decks, and their meals were brought to them by an Orient-looking crew, Lavers said.

They said they were put to sea in a poorly provisioned lifeboat six days ago.

One Sri Lankan said they were in the lifeboat about 11 and a half days from land.

However, Lavers said police were not convinced that the refugees were that much time adrift.

"There is some consistency in their story, but some inconsistencies in the facts," Lavers told a news conference.

Early reports said the refugees were found cold, wet and hungry, but Lavers said they were dry, warm and clad in good, heavy clothing. He said hunks of dry bread were found in the lifeboats.

"We find it remarkable that they could spend five days in the fog and wind and still be that dry," he said.

A Canadian immigration spokesman said all of the refugees have agreed to stay in Canada and some said they have relatives in Montreal.

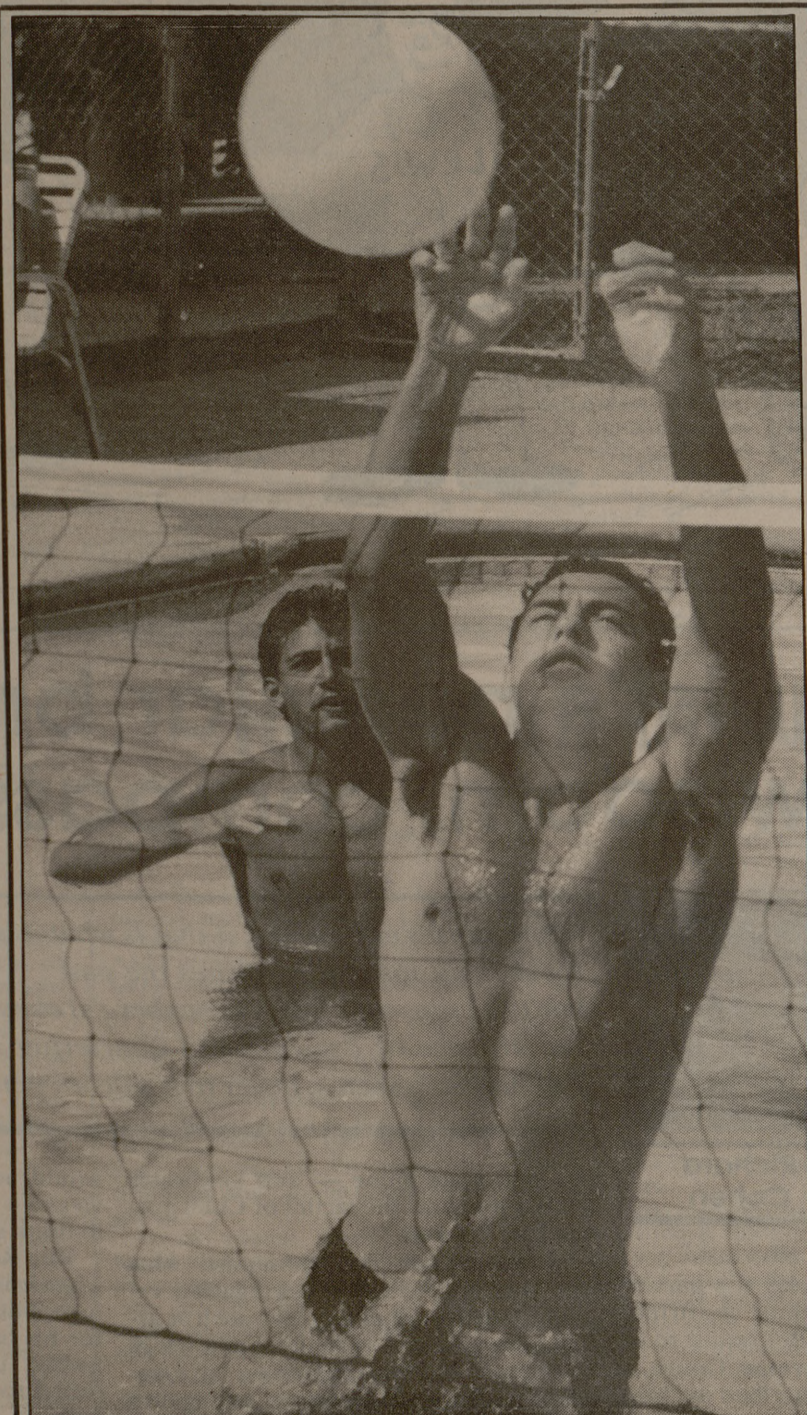


Photo by Kimberly M. Pettibon

Beating The Heat

Terre Atweol, a senior nutrition major from San Antonio, tries to block the ball as Anthony Godinich, a senior marketing major from Galveston, backs him up. The two residents of Country Place Apartments were taking part in the complex's daily water volleyball game.

Bullock calls for plan to overhaul sales tax

AUSTIN (AP) — Comptroller Bob Bullock called Tuesday for a comprehensive tax overhaul that would lower the sales tax rate, but force Texans to pay sales tax on more goods and services.

Under the plan, virtually all goods and services would be subject to the sales tax except food for home consumption, prescription medicine, doctor bills, agricultural items, child care and educational and religious items.

The sales tax now does not cover services, such as professional fees, auto repairs and haircuts.

"To put it bluntly, Texas is going broke with a tax system that relies too heavily on the oil and gas industry and too heavily on a sales tax that doesn't cover vast sectors of the economy," Bullock said in a report entitled "Time of Change — Time of Choice."

The comptroller's plan is the fourth one offered to lawmakers as a way to battle the budget crisis.

Bullock has no power to implement the plan. But his report tells lawmakers that "drafts of legislation to implement this plan are available on request."

Gov. Mark White is pushing a plan that includes budget cuts and temporarily raising the sales tax rate from the current 4.125 percent to 5.25 percent until Sept. 1, 1987.

Ann Arnold, White's press aide, said the governor believes the 1987 Legislature should look at restructuring the tax system, but that it should not be considered during the current special session.

Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby's plan includes cuts and a permanent increase in the sales tax to 5 percent.

Speaker Gib Lewis has vowed to block any tax hike.

He prefers budget cuts to solve the cash flow problem until lawmakers convene for the 1987 regular session in January.

Bullock said canceling exemptions to the sales tax and making other fundamental changes in the tax system would raise enough money to allow a lowering of the tax rate.

For example, the state could bring in an additional \$670.7 million in fis-

cal 1987 by making the changes and lowering the sales tax rate to 3 percent, Bullock said.

Those changes would add up to a total of \$1.88 billion for the state in the 1988-89 budget period, he said.

The effort is based on shifting the tax burden toward service industries, a growing segment of the state's economy, and away from the oil and gas business that supported

the state for years before petroleum prices fell.

His plan also would lower the oil and gas production taxes to 4.4 percent. The oil production tax is now 4.6 percent. The gas production tax is now 7.5 percent.

The separate motor vehicle sales tax, now 5 percent, would be repealed and replaced with the general sales tax.

White: Using PUF money no answer to budget woes

AUSTIN (AP) — Gov. Mark White sounded a stern warning to legislators Tuesday, saying it would be wrong for them to raid the public school trust fund for cash to balance the state budget.

"It would break our commitment to education if we now take money from the Permanent School Fund to solve the current budget problem," White told about 800 teachers and school administrators.

"I will oppose any measure that will damage that Permanent School Fund," he said.

Struggling to make up a projected \$3.5 billion deficit, the House Appropriations Committee has voted to take \$1.1 billion from two education funds long viewed as untouchable — the school fund and the Permanent University Fund.

The two funds are the backbone of the state's higher education and public education systems. The principal, which is income from state lands, cannot be spent. But interest income is put into funds that are spent.

The university fund money, now totaling about \$2.4 billion, is divided between the University of Texas and Texas A&M systems. In a speech to a statewide school finance symposium, White said creation of Permanent School Fund was "a historic and far-sighted commitment of this state to provide a solid and unshakable foundation for public schools."

Raiding that fund for a quick-fix of cash "would badly hurt the schoolchildren of Texas," the governor said.

Speaker Gib Lewis, D-Fort Worth, continued to defend his plan to pull cash from the funds. However, he said it faces an uphill fight against White and Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby.

Asked Hobby's reaction, Lewis said, "He was opposed to that also."

"The worst thing we can do is walk away from the special session and not examine every element and segment of state government. There are no sacred cows."

Reagan offers grain farmers 'new aid'

Reagan 'optimistic' about autumn summit

CHICAGO, Ill. (AP) — President Reagan, trying to boost Republican election chances in the Midwest grain belt, offered what the White House portrayed as new aid to farmers Tuesday and said he already has spent record amounts on agriculture programs.

Citing a "long history of conflicting and haphazard policies" toward farmers, Reagan said at a nationally televised news conference that heavy spending on agriculture this year is designed to ease farmers back to self-sufficiency.

Official estimates put farm program spending this year at \$26 billion, and private analysts say the figure could hit \$30 billion or more. In the 1970s, spending levels hovered around \$4 billion annually.

Earlier, in an appearance at the Illinois state fair at Springfield, Reagan announced that farmers will be able to get price-support loans for grain stored on the ground this year, as well as for that in approved storage facilities such as silos or grain elevators.

Presidential spokesman Larry Speakes said that while "there is no

CHICAGO (AP) — President Reagan, awaiting a report from U.S. arms negotiators headed home from Moscow, said Tuesday night he is optimistic about chances for a successful autumn summit, partly, he said, because of difficulties facing the Kremlin leadership.

Reagan would provide no details about the new round of arms discussions and said, "I don't have a reply yet" from the delegation that just concluded two days of high-level, highly secret talks with its Soviet counterparts.

In a rare out-of-town news

conference, Reagan said that when he meets Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev — the date has yet to be set — he hopes to make "more progress than has been made in a number of years because of some of the problems that are concerning the general secretary (Gorbachev) at this time."

Reagan said, "Yes, I'm optimistic."

He did not elaborate, but Gorbachev has been struggling with a faltering economy and with the

recent nuclear reactor accident at Chernobyl.

On another issue, Reagan said virtually all black leaders in South Africa are opposed to U.S. economic sanctions against the government in Pretoria because they believe they would be disruptive to the region.

Reagan said he welcomed a suggestion earlier in the day by South African President P.W. Botha that the leaders of Western nations that oppose economic sanctions meet with his government to discuss the current situation.

out-of-town news conference at an airport hotel.

With low prices, sagging agricultural exports and overproduction, Reagan acknowledged that farmers are facing "some of the hardest of the hard times" despite farm sup-

port programs that will cost taxpayers \$26 billion this year.

He called his decision to subsidize wheat sales to the Soviets "our most dramatic initiative to expand farm exports."

Without mentioning Secretary of

State George Shultz by name, Reagan said, "For some this is difficult to understand; after all, the Soviets are our adversaries. And I've never been accused of being naive."

"The truth is, I didn't make this decision for them; I made it for the American farmer and all Americans. Because if that grain isn't sold to the Soviets, most of it will be stockpiled, costing the taxpayers and depressing grain prices here at home."

He said the subsidized grain will be sold "at the same price the Soviets would pay to buy it from one of our foreign competitors. Meeting world competition this way is fair to American taxpayers, fair to our trading partners and, most of all, fair to American farmers."

The sale, involving 4 million metric tons, has been attacked by Australia, Canada and other grain-exporting countries.

In his speech, Reagan announced formation of a federal drought assistance task force to help farmers in the sun-baked Southeast, where farm losses are estimated at more than \$2.3 billion.

Fall in-state tuition reaches \$16 an hour

By Olivier Uyttebrouck
Staff Writer

In accordance with legislation passed in 1985, tuition for Texas residents will rise to \$16 per semester credit hour for the 1986-87 academic year.

The \$4 increase from last year's rate is part of the tuition hike passed by the Texas Legislature, which will raise in-state tuition to \$24 per semester credit hour by 1996.

Two student fees also will increase this year: The student services fee is \$5.20 per credit hour this year, up from \$4.60 per credit hour last year, and the student center complex fee is \$20 this year, up from \$18 last year.

Bob Pionka, manager of the

student financial fiscal office, says that despite state budgetary problems, he has heard no plans for accelerating tuition increases above the rate set by the 1985 legislative act.

Tuition for non-resident and foreign students will remain at \$120 per credit hour for the 1986-1987 academic year.

Non-resident tuition for the 1987-88 academic year is expected to remain at \$120 per credit hour, says Mack C. Adams, an assistant commissioner with the Texas College and University coordinating board. Beginning next year, non-resident tuition will increase so that it covers the entire cost of educating the student.

Dole: Democrats in Senate 'delaying' Contra aid vote

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats argued Tuesday the United States was lurching toward war in Central America, but Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole charged that opponents of a \$100 million aid package for Nicaragua's Contra rebels have "stonewalled, dilly-dallied and delayed."

Rejecting the war warnings, Dole, R-Kan., said the \$100 million in mostly military aid sought by President Reagan was "an essential part of any strategy to achieve a fair, negotiated settlement" with Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista government.

But Democrats argued that the \$70 million in arms and \$30 million in logistical aid would lead to a Vietnam-style involvement in Central America.

Pending before the Senate was a proposal by Sen. James Sasser, D-Tenn., that would kill the aid. That was considered a key test vote, but even if Contra aid opponents lose, some have vowed to wage a filibuster to block final approval of the aid.

Dole scheduled a vote Wednesday to force final action by cutting off extended debate, a move that requires the support of 60 of the Senate's 100 members.

Sen. Alan Cranston, D-Calif., said, "The Senate is being asked to give final approval for a war. Once again we are stumbling down the slippery slope toward direct American involvement in a foreign war without the support of the American people."

But Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Ind., Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman, called comparisons between Nicaragua and Vietnam "nonsense. . . . That is a way to drag up emotions and history in a false way. Our policy is not to go to war."

Lugar added that "abandonment of the Contras would result in a permanent military and subversive threat in Nicaragua that would make democracy and economic development in Central America jeopardized and perhaps impossible."

Reagan's aid package cleared the Democratic-controlled House on June 25 by a 221-209 vote. Earlier this year, the Senate approved a similar \$100 million Contra aid plan, 53-47, but that bill died.

Angolans claim attack by S. Africa

LISBON, Portugal (AP) — The Angolan Defense Ministry said its troops killed 40 South African soldiers and captured four others while repulsing attacks on army installations around the southern town of Cuito Canavale.

The state-run news agency Angop, monitored Tuesday in Lisbon, quoted a ministry statement released in the Angolan capital of Luanda as saying three South African battalions assaulted Angolan positions for three hours Monday morning.

The South African troops tried to take the town later in the day, the report said.