# -FOCUS-

## Sri Lanka: A Chance for Peace

by Nirupama Subramanian in Jaffna

Jaffna limps back to life as Tamil who had fled during the army offensive return. But this may again prove a temporary respite unless a political solution is found.

T the 150-year-old Vem-A bady Girls High School in Jaffna town, a science class is in progress. Dressed in clean white uniforms, the children are bent studiously over their books. As the school gong strikes, they noisily troop out of the classrooms, pick up their bicycles and vanish chattering into the afternoon. A peaceful scene were it not for the bombed-out roof of the school's hall, the pianos de-stroyed by shells, the ransacked library, the smell of burning paper still hanging in

the air. The school has been rebuilt twice, once after the 1987 war between the LTTE and Indian troops, and in 1990, after the war between the Tigers and the Sri Lankan forces. When government troops moved into the town once again in

At least \$200 million is needed right away to put Jaffna back in order. Long-term rehabilitation will cost another \$1 billion.

December last year, this school again suffered extensive damage. "Each time we rebuild, we are driven into the ashes," says Vice-Principal Sarojini Tharmalingam.

Like her, for most Tamils of Jaffna peninsula, peace now means only an absence of war, till the next round of battle. There was peace in the five years following 1990 when the LTTE was in total control of the peninsula; despite the shortages of food and other necessities, and even the complete lack of some of them (like electricity and petrol), life went on. On the face of it. there is peace now, even though a lasting solution is still elusive more than six months after the Sri Lankan military launched a successful operation, code-named Riviresa, which pushed the LTTE out of

NUFA was helplessly

wandering when her

stepfather dislodged

from the house. She was

only four years old. Workers of

Aparajevo Bangladesh, a local

organisation, espied her,

erying, and brought her to the

Arambagh Boys and Girls Club.

Since then, it has become her

her schooling up to Class II.

and now wants to study more.

for she believes that nobody

almost all the realities of life."

said Anufa, now 12-year old.

while talking to The Daily Star

during a 12-'O-clock singing

and dancing session, which is

also a part of their education.

my living, as they taught me

how to operate a sewing ma-

chine, but I want to study

fairly educated person, I in-

tend to teach those disadvan-

taged as I once was." She

didn't sketched her life like

many who went to work in the

right there at the Kamlapur

Railway Station in the capital -

the country's busiest one. With

the metallic reports of the

trains coupled with crank

There are many like Anufa

redymade garment factories.

more: and after becoming

adding: "I can now easily earn

can ever neglect an educated

While living here, she did

"Over the years, I've learnt

non-governmental

the Jaffna peninsula, putting government forces in complete control of the area for the first time in the history of the ethnic conflict.

It is to savour this peace again that thousands of Tamils who fled their homes in the Valikamam region of the peninsula - under orders from the LTTE after Riviresa began last October — have now begun returning home from eastern Jaffna. With the Tigers retreating quietly, those who had moved out to Chavakacheri and Point Pedro have begun returning to their homes in a steady stream.

The Sri Lankan Government estimates that more than two lakh of the around four lakh almost the whole population of the area - displaced people have returned in the last month. Jaffna town, once the most densely populated urban centre in the country which became a ghost town almost overnight as the Sri Lankan troops advanced into it last year, has regained some life. And so have the areas around. "We have come back because our homes are here, and because, once again, there is only

noises of the passengers, some

sportive shrill of voices - Sir.

grown-up muscular kulis.

one controlling authority. We can manage with either the Tigers or the army, not both in the same place," says a government employee who returned to Jaffna town from Point Pedro in the last week of

For the present, it is the army. Once confined to the Palaly camp in the north of Valikamam, the Sinhala soldiers now swarm the make-believe Tamil Eelam of the LTTE. The administration, including food distribution, is being run by the army. There are checkposts at several places where soldiers screen those passing through for likely LTTE infiltrators. Walls in market places have been scrawled with names of regiments of the Sri Lankan Army stationed here. The LTTE insignia — the

face of a roaring tiger - has

been removed from wherever

it had been put up, and their

from 15,000 in October. And to save its cadre for future guerrilla incursions, the LTTE is even withdrawing from bases like Killinochchi — a key link between the mainland and the peninsula — which are being threatened by the army. White flags, put up by the people themselves, mark the

heroes' memorials have been

broken to bits. An ltte audito-

rium is one of the few standing

testimonies to what once was.

Now confined to the jungles in

Mullaithivu and Mannar on the

mainland, their strength has

dwindled to around 8,000

homes of those who have returned. Still more families are on their way back from the east, their belongings loaded onto any available vehicle. It was the lure of a proper home. coupled with their miserable condition as refugees in Chavakacheri and other areas. that brought them back. "Who

can turn down the opportunity to return home?" asks Kamala Devi Arumathurai, who along with her postmaster husband and daughter was one of the hundred families to be airlifted from Vavuniya to Jaffna last fortnight.

More such displaced fami-lies who had managed to reach government-controlled territory in Vavuniya are on their way back. In Colombo too. around 6,000 people have registered to be taken back to Jaffna. Banks in the region reopened in the first week of May and schools in the second. According to the Jaffna Government Agent (JA), around 7,000 children out of a total of 25,000 are back in classrooms.

At the Jaffna Teaching Hospital — it had shifted to Point Pedro during Riviresa only a few doctors and other employees have returned, and

there is a severe shortage of medicines. But patients are queuing up. The hospital, which has seen heavy fighting since 1987, is carrying out repairs. Also, only a skeleton remains of the ga's office, known as the kachcheri which was booby-trapped by the LTTE to prevent soldiers from taking control of the building during Riviresa. It has been com-

pletely destroyed. Shell-pocked by successive battles. Jaffna is a long way from recovery. The Government will need \$70 million immediately to put the peninsula back into working order, while the long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction of the region could cost at least \$1 billion, an amount that Colombo plans to raise from friendly countries.

However, the LTTE is still dreaded - most Jaffna residents are convinced that the

Tigers can stage a comeback, and that if the army cannot wipe them out completely, the Government should at least involve them in negotiations, otherwise peace would remain illusory. For the army, which was always viewed as the militant arm of Sinhala chauvinism, gaining civilian acceptability is now crucial. Soldiers have been on their best behaviour since the beginning of Riviresa. Realising this, the LTTE has been provoking them to retaliate through a

The LTTE has been provoking the Sri Lankan Army to retaliate, hoping to catch civilians in the crossfire.

series of skirmishes, hoping to catch civilians in the crossfire. But so far, they have been disappointed.

While the Government has taken pride in the return of civilians to Jaffna, it has been dragging its feet on a political solution. Says Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar: "You

cannot rule out the war-weary

all this politics, and even devo-

lution, first and foremost, give

us an administration that works." For them, of para-

mount importance is a civilian

administration that works." In

January this year, the Govern-

ment brought out a legal draft

of the August 1995 devolution

proposals that have been

universally acclaimed as far-

pointed many, especially the

non-LTTE Tamil parties, who

described it as a "dilution" of

the earlier proposals. Presi-

discussion in the Parlia-

mentary Select Committee

(PSC), and that only through

discussions would the

Government take a decision on

tricky issues such as the unit

of devolution in the north-east.

the status of Buddhism as the

foremost religion of the

country, and the powers of the

However, with the Govern-

ment's military success, inter-

est in deliberating on the

political package seems to be

flagging at the 21-member

PSC. At one meeting earlier

this month, only three mem-

bers were present; a fourth, to

achieve the quorum, was found

However, the text disap-

reaching.

Governor.

Douglas Devananda, the founder of the Eelam People's Democratic Front (EPDF), which with nine MPs is the strongest Tamil parliamentary party. According to him and leaders of other Tamil political parties in Colombo, Kumaratunge is taking advantage of the military success to postpone a political solution. A suggestion to form an interim council for the area with representatives of Tamil political parties has been almost

shelved. "There now seems to be a temp-tation on the part of the Government to project itself as 'the sole protector of the Tamil people," says Loganathan Ketheeswaran of the Colombobased Centre for Policy Research and Analysis. Indeed. one of the first acts of the Government after the win was

Tamil parties allege that after the army success, Government's interest in working out a political package has flagged.

to open an office of Suddu Nelam, a social organisation fronting for Kumaratunga's Sri Lanka Freedom Party in Jaffna town, In contrast, only with much reluctance did the Government agree to bring representatives of Tamil parties to Jaffna, and has not yet permitted them to open offices. According to Ketheeswaran, if the Government believes that it can reach the people over the heads of Tamil politicians, it is only "fooling"

But then, the Tamil parties are themselves in a dilemma Forced out from the peninsula in 1990 by the Tigers, they have little rapport with the Tamils and are nervous about their reception in Jaffna. More important, the LTTE threat to their lives cannot be countered without weapons from the Government. But Kumaratunge Tamil people saying, enough of is firm that no Tamil group will be allowed to bring arms to Jaffna: "It would be fatal to allow them into the region

Confusion among the Tamil parties has made them look once again to Tamil Nadu for support. Though the newly sworn-in chief minister. M Karunanidhi, has not yet acquiesced to a request for an appointment by five Tamil leaders, the very move has sent panic signals in the Sinhalese leadership. A prominent leader warned Tamil politicians against "running to

Although Sri Lankan Tamil leaders are convinced that a decent package can still be hammered out of the devolution proposals if the Government only demonstrated more interest. Kumaratunge has problems of her own - a' stagnant economy, a noncooperative opposition and the rebellion against devolution in her alliance's ranks. Still, the prime minister is better placed than any other Sri Lankan leader to win the hearts and minds of the Tamils, by restoring not just normalcy but a lasting peace to Jaffna. Unless Kumaratunge grabs this opportunity, the military successes of the past

with guns," says Kadirgamar. dent Chandrika Kumaratunge's Big Brother in the Colombo defence at the time had been dally Observer a government that the proposals were up for lorgan.

six months may just dissipate.

with great difficulty. "The PSC is dying a natural death," says

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Identity cards being checked at Achchuveli

### On to the Streets and Back, Never Defeated by Life by Ekram Kabir

amare thaen, aami loiyete pain many ways, specially by room — are always heard. These are the child porters working side by side with the "No matter how weighty the luggage is. I can carry it, well. of course, with the help of my buddies," says Monir Hossain with a damn-the-life accent in his voice who usually spend his siesta at Aparajeyo's Arambagh

Club or Navabazar Drop in Cen-"These street children, mostly boys, earn quite a fair amount of money everyday, but emulating the elders-at-work. they have a tendency to squander their earnings away



religiously assemble everyday

watching movies everyday at all the cinema halls around the city. What we advise them. when affectionately closer to their psyche, is not to waste the money they earn - they can have a future of their own if they save it, and interestingly these tough-kids listen to us," says Wahida Banu, the Programme Coordinator of the organisation.

These take-the-arrows-all children stop working on the platform at Kamlapur just before it is 11am. Leaving behind the Platform-I and Platform-2 on the left, where the asphalt of the road ends, they

students therein are also dif-These schools are often the initial contact places for 'new' children. These emphasise on building of relationships of trust between the child and the organisation. The schools operate for two hours every day, barring weekends, and the students are looked after by four teaching staff. "The class hours have been set so that it doesn't deprive them of their meagre income," says

Wahida Banu.

According to the Programme Coordinator, Aparajeyo aims to focus its many activities on providing formal and non-formal education. and skill training to these

with reading and writing ma-

terials in hands. It's their

school erected on the street

by Aparajeyo Bangladesh. Be-

cause of the school's open-air

atmosphere, it's called street

school'. Previously it was run

by Terre des Hommes.

street schools other two being

situated at Sadarghat Launch

Terminal and Karwan Bazaar.

the places where these left-out

children engage themselves to

work. The outlook of these

schools are different, for the

There are now three

Switzerland.

children, as part of its philosophy, to either re-integrate them with their families or to rehabilitate them to independent living in the society.

The 'vocational training programme', which started in '94, is quite an example of the organisation's philosophy. This training is provided in. the "sewing" and "bicycle and rickshaw-repairing trades." The facilities are incorporated into a corner of Arambagh Club. The programme includes a month-long foundation course, followed by three months of skills training, and

an additional three-month-

long practical training at vari-

ous workshops in the city. The number of children enrolled under this programme is 24 - 12 boys and same number of girls. According to Aparajevo's progress report of ongoing vocational training course, the trainees of bicycle and rickshaw-repair ing" and "sewing "trades, the foundation courses, have successfully reached the end of their course module.

The instructor says: "These children concentrated well they knew the pros and cons of what they learnt."

Most noteworthy, among all Aparaievo's programmes, are the Daycare Centres where working mothers - garment workers, day labourers and

slum-dwellers leave their babies before going to work. Under the organisation's Daycare Programme, with 12 sub centres at Azimpur. Rayer Bazaar (now Jikatala), Mohammadpur and Pallabi, the approach is education and healthcare. Children of six months to

housemaids - who mostly are

Soldiers patrolling the Palaly-Jaffna road

three years age-group are allowed to receive the necessary care, and each centre takes care of 20 children whose tooding are paid by their mothers. Why are all these hassles?

Answering this question. Wahida Banu says: "The needs of 'street children' in urban areas are well-known phenomena in the developing countries, and in Bangladesh, it's a dire need. These are a shifting mass of children and young people who are simply struggling to exist and survive in the shadows and backstree sub-cultures of overcrowded cities, whom society has forgotten or prefers to ignore. While wrestling for their very existence, these children are vulnerable to abuse, violence and exploitation. What we re trying to do is to show them that they are not completely forgotten, and we offer them hope affection and true care with the shepherding of relalively a better tomorrow."

## The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

#### Tuesday 25th June All programmes are in local

time. We recommend gro grammes printed in bold. There may be changes in the programmes)

### BTV

3:00 Comm. Quran Programme Summary 3:10 Recitation From the Geeta 3:15 Documentary Film: Cinema Eurone 4:00 News in Bangla 4:15 Eshe Para Shikhi: Mass Education 4-45 Cartoon Series: The Animals of Parthingwood 5:00 News in Bangla 5:20 Sangeeta : Modern Songs 6:00pm News in Bangla 6:05 National Television Debate Competition 7:00 The News 7:05 Open University 7:25 Comedy Series: Seinfeld 8:00 News in Bangla 8:40 Drama Serial 10:00 News in English 10:30 Boipatra 10:55 Mini Series: Return To 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Wednesday's programme

### BBC

6:00am BBC Newsroom inc. v. and Business Reporti Asia Today 24 Hours 9:00 BBC World Headlines 9:05 Panorama 10:00 BBC Newsday 1:00 BBC World News 1:15 Panorama 2:80 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: One Foot In The Past 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Time Out:Tomorrow's World 4:00 BBC Newsdesk 6:00pm BBC World News 6:15 The Money Programme 7:86 BBC World News 7:15 World Business Report 7:30 BBC Newshour Asia & Pacific 8:30 Time Dut: The Travel Show 9:80 BBC World News 9:15 Pangrama 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 Time Out: Film '96 11:00 The World Today 1:00 BBC World Headlines 1:05 Panorama 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: Acction 3:00 BBC World Report inc. World Business Report/24 - Hours 5:00 BBC World News 5:10 Newsmight

Best Of Ek Ka Teen 9:30 Tuy Of



The Pops 10:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 10:30 First Day First Show 11:00 Rewind VJ Sophiya 11:30 The Ride VJ Trev 12:00mm Over the Edge 12:38 Launchpad 1:30 Speak Easy 2:00 By Demand VJ Trey 3 00 Frame By Frame

### STAR PLUS

6:30am Voltron 7:00 Teenage

### CHANNEL V

7:00am Rewint VJ Sophya 8:00 Jump Start VJ Trey 9:00 Frame By Frame 12:00moon The Vibe VJ Luke 1:00 By Cemand VJ Trey 2:88 Rewind VJ Sophiya 3:86 Big Fining VJ Alessandra 4:30 Ev Demand VJ Trey 5:30 Rewind VJ Sophiya 6:30 The Vibe VJ Luke 7:30 First Day First Show 8:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 9:00 The



Hum Paanch on Zee TV, Tonight at 8:30

Mutant Ninja Turtles 7:30 Gl Joe 8:00 Saber Rider And The Star Sherrif 8:30 The Adventuces of Black Beauty 9:00 Aerobics Oz Style 9:30 Nanny and the Professor 10:00 Mr Belvedere 10:30 Yan Can Cook 11:00 E! TV 11:30 Gabriella 12:30 Santa Barbara 1:30 The Bold & The Beautiful 2:00 The Oprah Winfrey Show 3:00 Remington Steele 4:00 Yan Can Cook 5:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 5:30 Adventures Of Black Beauty 6:00pm Lost in Space 7:98 Home and Away 7:38 Entertainment Tonight 8:00 MASH 8:30 The Flying Doctors 9:30 The

#### The Beautiful 11:00 Santa Bar bara 12:00mn Hard Copy 12:30 Baywatch 1:30 Kriket! 2:30 Entertainment Toroght 3:00 The

Extraordinary 10.30 The paid &

Opraft Wintrey Show 4:00 Hard Copy 4 30 Home and Away 5 00 The sais 5.30 lie STAR Sports

### 6:00am Gillette World and saema 630 mant Writing 1. ... stem Mania 7.30 vembledov

Sturks 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 1:30 Adventure Green Ice 15 (Hindi Subtitles: 3.30 Adventure. The (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Classic Lorns Doone Trinds Subtitles 730 Adventure Tikky Drachenauge Hook Solutetes 9:00 Hollywood 1 mi | 9:30 Action Mad Dogs And Englishmen Handi Subtitles: 11 15 The Bulletin 11 30 100 Year OF Ginema Japan-Ran (English Subtitles) 2:00 World Cinema: The Bride (English Subtitles: 3:30 Film Club: Me And Veronica (Arabic Subtitles) 5:30 Action: Corly Bad Love 18 (Arabic

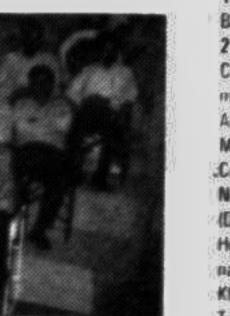


Instinct Purush Kshetra on EL TV, Tonight at 9:30

1st Round 8:30 Formula Nippon From Tokachi Speedway Japan 10:00 Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Championships 1996 From London, GB Day 1 1st Round 4:00 Inside PGA Tour 4:30 Fremula Nippon From Tokachi Speedway Japan 6:00pm The European Tour BMW Int'l Open H/L 7:00 Live Wimble don Lawn Tennis Championships 1996 From London, GB 1st Round 1:00 Futbot Mundial 1:30 Prime Journa Fights TBC 3:30 ActivaMen Journagustin Came com

### STAR MOVIES

7.30am Action Lyann Leve In 15 Arabic Subtitles) 9:30 Family Viatership Down PG (Arabic Subtitles: 11,30 Comedy: Life



Lawn Termis Championships H/L

ZEE TV 5:30am Infotainment (TMM) 6:00 News 6:30 Jagran 7:00 ZED Naya A to Z 7:30 ZED · Network mg 8:00 ZED Naya A To Z 8:30 Hum Honge Kaamyab 9:00 Insight 9:30 Gaane Anjaane 10:00 Lijjat Khana Khazana 10:30 Celeste 11:00 Close Up Antakshn 11:30 Nirma Aaha 12:00 Mr Minto 12:30 TMKB 1:00 ZED Chota Byte 1:30 Asian Sky Shop 2:30

Const. 4:00 Nerolac Aashiyana 4:30 Rasna Spread Ek Minute 5:00 ZED - Chota Byte 5:30 Do Se Bhale feen 6:00 It's My Show 6:30 Through the Gears 7:00 Captam Cook Shaalu Dawat 7:30 Gaane Anjaane 8:00 Film Deewane 8:30 Hum Paanch 9:00 Sailaab 9:30 Tara 10:00 Hasratein 10:30 News Roundup 11:00 Gharounda 11:30 Tanaav 12:00 Daraar 12:30 TVS Sa Re Ga Ma

Tara 3 00 Filmi Chakkar 3 30

### Intotamment (TMM) PTV

1:00 17 Shirley Road 1:38 Gal-

axzee 2:00 Love Stories 2:30

8:08-im Triawat Aur Tariumal Hanut Naat 8:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khaliram 8:45 Beauty Care 8:50 Fun Kadha 9:10 Dhanak & Health Tips 10:05 Hartaan He\_Deepak 10:30 English Film : Home Improvement 10:55 Milk Naghma 11:00 Khabrain 11:10 Anita (Senal) 12:00noon Sports Hour 12:55 Quran-e-Hakeem 1:02 Bismillah 1:15 The Science Show 2:00 Yeh Jahan 2:25 Animated Classics 3:15 Geography & Sammar School 4:20 Mitti Sona 5:00 Alfalt Huma Labbaik 5:25 Qablii Mein Soochta Hoen 6:25 Aigu .Courses 7:00 Dhanak 7:45 English News 8:15 UN Quiz 8:45 Jab (Drama Serial) 9:00 Break for Headline News 10:00 Khabar nama & Commercial News & Khushal Pakistan 11:20 VCD Top Ten 12:30 Dr Quin 1:35 Khas Khas Khabrini Close down

### SONY ET

8:30am Gaine Jaane Maane 9:00 The Three Stonges 9:30 Dennis The Menace 10:00 | Dream Of Jeanne 10:30 Public Keya Bola 11:00 Penchan 11:30 Cine Matinee Hindi Feature Film 2:30pm Krsmat 3:00 Zamin Asman 3:30 More Message Men Geet 4:00 Surf Where Of Farrance 4:30 Jan Br Hanuman 5:00 10 Civil Lines 5:30 The Three Stooges 6:00 Dennis

### Jeanne 7:00 Mere Message Men Geet 7.30 Gaane Jaane Maane 8:30 Cine Prime Hindi Feature Film 11.30 Jagir 12:00mn Apne Jaise Types 12:30 Siddhi 1:00 Sunday Ki Sunday 1:30 Mere Message Men Geet 2:00 Khova Khova

DD 7 8:05am Janmadin 8:20 Binodon

8:30 Ogo Nilanjana 9:00 Janani 9:30 TBA 10:00 Adhunik Gaan 10:15 Instrumental Music 12:30 Prachir 1:00 Janani (Senal) 1:30 Bengali Movie Club Film Show 5.05 Science Prog 5:30 News 5:35 Tale Play 6:00 Palli Katha 6:30 Chitranjali 6:55 Amake Dekhun 7:30 Bangla Sambad 7:55 Durundan 8:00 Param Purush Ramkrishna 8:30 Naari 9:00 Policer Dairy Theke (Drama Serial) 9:30 Nabr Ganjer Daitya (Serial)

Show: Putra Badhu 1:00 Closed

### EL TV

00:30am Lata Mangeshkar Special 01:30 Love Love Love 02:30 Tarane Aur Fasane 03:30 Jeeten dra Special 04:30 Hanste Hanste 05:30 Lata Mangeshkar Special 06:30 Love Love Love 07:30 Tarane Aur Fasane 08:30 Jee'endra Special 09:30 Hanste Hanste

11:30 Scandal 12:00 Music Time 1:00mn Ajeeb Dastaan Hai Yeh 2:00 Kishore Kumar Special 3:00 Shudh Detergent Karz 3:30 Sorry Meri Lorry 4:00 Jawah Do 4:30 Namaskar 5:00 Frooti Its My Choice 5:30 Jazbaat 6:30 Ched Chaad 7:30 Sargam 8:00 Godrei Storewel Filmi Chaat 8:30 Teen Do Paanch 9:00 Ortem Hit Thi Hit Har 9:30 Instinct Purush Kshetra 10:30 Newsline 11:00 Geet Bahar 12:00 Tarannum

10:30 Awaz Navi Andaz Wah

8.30 Hit Hai Fit Hai 9:00 Taraana 9:30 Rukhsat (Mithun C. Smita Patit) 12:15 Box Office 12:45 Prem Geet (Raj Babbar, Anita Raj) 3:30 pm Hollywood To Bollywood 4:00 Dayayan (VinodKhanna Feroz Khani) 6:45 Lahu Ke Do Rang (Vinod Khana, Shabana Azmi)

ZEE CINEMA

9:30 Songs 10:00 Disco Dancer

(Mithun C. Kimi) 12:45 am Veeru

### 10:00 Bengali Movie Club Film Dada (Dhamendra, Amrita "Linigia) Garfield ® by Jim Davis







