

THE HINDU

Online edition of India's National Newspaper

Monday, Jan 19, 2009

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Tamil Nadu - **Chennai**

Drawing one into children's troubled times and minds

Staff Reporter

Sri Lankan Tamil refugee children gave portraits of guns, houses on fire...

— Photo: M. Karunakaran



Expressive: Rohini (left) and Divya Sathyaraj view paintings by children from Sri Lankan Tamil refugee camps at The Madras Terrace House in Chennai on Sunday.

CHENNAI: Drawing competitions for children generally get entries showing flowers, landscapes, pets or happy families. But a contest organised for Sri Lankan Tamil refugee children brought out pictures of guns, houses on fire and boats full of people on rough seas.

The pictures by the children in refugee camps in various parts of Tamil Nadu were displayed at The Madras Terrace House in Royapettah.

At the valedictory ceremony of the exhibition on Sunday, actor and social activist Rohini gave away prizes to some of the children who were judged winners in the drawing contest.

The exhibition, titled 'Sunshine in a teardrop,' was organised by the Organisation for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OfERR). The drawings were picked from among 500 entries by children living in 117 refugee camps in the State. Ms. Rohini said, "During war and conflict, women and children are the most affected. The children have expressed emotions that can only come from having experienced very difficult times." Some of the pictures also carry a few

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lines written by the children. "When will there be peace in our country?," writes P. Vijayakumar, who lives in Nagavathy Anai refugee camp in Dharmapuri district. The children also dream of a bright future. R. Danesh Kumar has drawn himself as a computer engineer. Some others have portrayed themselves as astronauts or doctors.

Poongkothai Chandrahasan, a resource person with OfERR, said, "The drawings give us a glimpse into the troubled minds of these children, and are an expression of their memories, aspirations and anxieties."

The children's photographs taken by photographer R. Sunder were displayed alongside the paintings and drawings.

Actor Sathyaraj's daughter Divya interacted with the children and gave them presents.

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