

# Saturday Review

## SRI LANKA

Vol. 4 No. 22

17th August 1985

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# THIMPU: 50-50 CHANCE

There is a fifty-fifty chance that something useful would come out of the Thimpu talks.

The SATURDAY REVIEW understands from very reliable sources that a framework for a settlement has already been agreed upon by President Jayewardene and Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

All that has now to be done is to work out the details.

Necessarily, it has to be a compromise agreement, with both sides resiling somewhat from their stated original hardline positions.

This semi-optimistic review of the Thimpu talks is buttressed by the fact that President Jayewardene, through Cabinet spokesman Anandatissa de Alwis, made it known on Tuesday that after the current negotiations 'IT MAY NOT BE NECESSARY TO HAVE SUCH LENGTHY TALKS AGAIN.'

Very good. Because we have had too much of talk and little positive action so far.

The second round of the Thimpu talks began on 12th August as scheduled, with a barrage by the leader of the Sri Lankan Govern-

ment delegation, against the demands of the representatives of the Tamil people, led by the Eelam National Liberation Front and the Tamil United Liberation Front.

In a ten-page memorandum outlining the Government's position, it was stated that the ENLF's demand for the recognition of a separate homeland for the Tamil people, a separate nationality for them and the right of self-determination for the Tamil people could not be granted.

On the fourth demand, re citizenship for Tamils of recent

Indian origin, the memorandum pointed out that this matter had been discussed at the All-Party Conference, where it was decided to grant citizenship to 94,000 'stateless' persons.

The Government's arguments on all these demands were countered by the representatives of the Tamil people.

The talks are now at a very interesting stage. As we went to Press the Government was expected to spell out new proposals, which are expected to break the deadlock and end the years of confrontation between Tamil militants and the Government—just like the Punjab accord.

## GELIGNITIS!

On 11th July 1985 — just as the Thimpu talks were getting stuck — an alert policeman found a stack of gelignite in a van near St. Lucia's Cathedral at Kotahena. The intended target, the public was informed, was the Presidential Secretariat, and suspicion was cast on one of the Tamil militant groups.

While investigation of this find is continuing, a parcel containing gelignite was found by a sweeper in a compartment of the Jaffna night mail train after it reached Fort railway station on 12th August—the very day the Thimpu talks were resumed.

Coincidences apart, this 'find' has given the authorities a good excuse to once again search the trains running between Colombo and Jaffna.

Also, from 14th August and until further notice, the train services to the North will begin and terminate at the Maradana railway station.

We suggest that the alert sweeper, who was given a promotion and a cash reward, be sent to Jaffna to assist the Security Forces to ferret out land-mines.

## HW SPLITS HAIRS

Excerpts from the statement made by the leader of the Sri Lanka government delegation at Thimpu on 12th August:

**"TAMILS AS A DISTINCT NATIONALITY"**

Outside the field of international law, the word "Nationality" also signifies a group or community having an ethnic identity of its own. It is used then as a historical-biological term denoting a racial group which is a constituent element of a wider community of people who constitute the nation in that state. In that sense there is room for a proper distinction to be drawn and for recognition of a separateness of identity. In that sense also we recognise the existence of the Tamils as a distinct community and their right to a status of equality and dignity with the rest of the communities which constitute the Sri Lankan nation.

We are certainly prepared to consider any proposals that would help the preservation and protection of those rights and the interests which are necessary for the

continuing existence of the Tamils as an ethnic group. Our present proposals have taken note of these values and we shall consider any specific proposals that you wish to make in that regard.

**"AN IDENTIFIED TAMIL HOMELAND"**

On the other hand, we do recognise the fact that in certain parts of the country, there are strong concentrations which has given rise to special problems. In so far as there is a need to recognise their special rights and claims to preferential treatment which are not inconsistent with the fundamental principle of equality and equal protection and in so far as it is necessary to accord any special rights to the Tamil Community living in these areas for the preservation of their ethnic identity, we are prepared to consider reasonable proposals for achievement of these objectives. We shall place before you specific proposals for land settlement and land use, which in our opinion do satisfy this need.

**"THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION OF THE TAMIL NATION"**

The Third Principle of the Right of Self-determination, in so far as it implies the right of secession from and out of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and the Right to create a separate State is totally unacceptable and is in that form rejected. International Law recognises that the right of self-determination applies only to colonial peoples striving to win independence from foreign domination.

## Cops Outnumber Protesters

Ex-Prime Minister Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike's attempt to rouse public opinion against a "sell-out" of the Sinhalese by President Jayewardene's Government to the Tamil people evoked little response on 14th August, the third month observance of the Anuradhapura massacre.

At the main venue of protest, at the Thummula Junction (conjunction of Havelock Road and Baudhaloka Mawatha at Bambalapitiya), there were more policemen than protesters!



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### SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT

The Silver Stars Sports Club will conduct a Softball Cricket Tournament (20 Overs) on week-ends and Public holidays. Entries close 20th August. For details contact: S. Johnson (Secretary), Silver Stars Sports Club, 57 (15), Maruthady Road, Jaffna.

### MEMORIAL LECTURE

Prof. Rajni Kothari, Professor Emeritus Delhi University, delivered the 3rd N.M. Perera Memorial Lecture on 'Masses, Classes and the State' at the Ananda College Hall on Wednesday, 14th August.

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PRINCIPAL

# Mirje Framework For Devolution

The Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE) holds a Conference for Peace today (17th August).

Here's the text of the MIRJE proposals circularised among mass organisations in the country:

We welcome the decision of the Sri Lankan government and the representative organisations of the Tamil people to agree to a cease-fire and to begin negotiations for a political solution to the conflict between the two major ethnic communities inhabiting Sri Lanka.

We believe that the vast majority of all communities hope that these talks would succeed in arriving at a political solution that would remove the causes of armed conflict and bring about peace and reconciliation, while ensuring the rights of self-determination.

We also believe that such a political solution could be implemented with greater success if the people and their organisations, particularly among the Sinhalese and Tamils were involved in the peace process. Based on an understanding of the basis of ethnic hostility, the ways in which it has been used by vested interests and of the necessity of overcoming chauvinism, people should be discussing alternative patterns of devolution of power, which alone should be the basis of an acceptable political solution. It is only by such an involvement on the part of the people at large that any efforts to subvert the present negotiations by chauvinist elements could be overcome.

We propose, therefore, that an assembly of delegates from all major people's organisations be convened in order to adopt a series of proposals that could form the basis of a political solution and would help to end violence,

restore peace and promote inter-ethnic justice.

In order to facilitate such a discussion, we are putting forward for consideration the following basic framework which we believe will ensure a true devolution of power and guarantee equality of status to all members of all communities:

(a) The state shall consist of a central government and a number of territorial governments. Each territory shall be comprised of a number of districts which are geographically contiguous with each district having the power to decide which territory to join.

(b) Each territory shall have a territorial legislature and shall be responsible for all functions of legislation and of executive and Judicial administration, within its area of jurisdiction; in particular Education, Finance, Health, Land Settlement and Policing of the region shall fall within the jurisdiction of the territorial government.

(c) The central government shall have control over Defence, Foreign Affairs, and National Finance. It shall also be res-

ponsible for the execution and maintenance of country-wide services such as railways, post and telecommunications, harbours etc. which it will not be feasible to bring within territorial administration as well as of development projects which spread over a number of territories. In the latter instance it will act in full consultation with the territories concerned.

(d) All inhabitants of this country, and in particular the plantation workers of 'recent Indian Origin', who opt to become citizens of this country would have the right to obtain full citizenship rights. There should be no discrimination between citizens by descent and citizens by registration.

(e) Constitutional provisions will be made to ensure the implementation of the above proposals and protect the rights of the minorities in each territory; all acts which seek to impose special disabilities or confer special privileges on any ethnic group will be constitutionally barred.

(f) Any legislation purporting to amend or alter these provisions of the Constitution must have the consent of all the territorial governments.

## State Media Create Psychological Alienation

### — MIRJE (Jaffna)

The Jaffna Branch of the MIRJE passed the following resolutions at its sixth annual sessions held recently, presided over by Rev. Fr. Jayaseelan:

The Jaffna Branch welcomes the cease-fire declared by the government since June 18, 1985.

It impresses upon the government that more important than the physical stoppage of army and commando movement is the need to create the necessary political environment for the creation of a solution to the ethnic crisis which, in the opinion of this body, should be seen in the genuineness and sincerity of the steps it takes to politically educate the Sinhalese people that Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic country in which the Tamils of Sri Lanka are as much a part and parcel of the political, social

and cultural heritage of this country and should be considered

(i) As a distinct ethnic group, with a traditional homeland of its own within this island, and

(ii) Be given the equality of treatment and be assured of the absence of discriminations at all levels of national life; it should also be evident in the manner the state media is used. The media, even now speaks in divisive terms and is creating in the minds of Sinhala viewers, listeners and readers an antipathy for the Tamils and their efforts at winning their just political demands.

This body is afraid of the consequences that could flow from the psychological alienation between the ethnic groups that is being unabatedly created by the State media.



# Why The Tamils Want North-East Merger

At this time when serious efforts are being made to work out a solution to the Sri Lankan crisis acceptable to the major ethnic groups, we find that two factors have emerged as possessing a crucially decisive impact on the character of the peace talks and the acceptability of the political outcome of these talks to the bulk of the Tamil population of Sri Lanka.

Those are

(I) Constitutionally unambiguous and effective assurance that the Tamil people could continue to live in those territories that have been their traditional homelands without any fear regarding

- (a) their life and property and
- (b) the continuity of the demographic pattern of those areas; that is without fear of extinction

and (II) the assurance the agreed solution and the structures that are to be created for its implementation could provide to the youth in relation to

- (a) their safety and security and
- (b) their education and employment; without these assurances it would not be possible to demonstrate to them the advantages of ethnic unity within a united Sri Lanka.

It is important to show how these two factors have become crucial in the Sri Lankan Tamilian perception.

First, let us take the first problem.

## SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSONALITY

The territory claimed as traditionally Tamil areas constitute the northern and the eastern parts of the country. It does not include any other part, even though there are Sri Lankan Tamils living in some other parts in great numbers. The North and the East are not just geographical entities; they do have a socio-cultural personality of their own.

It is also true that there has been a demand put forward by some political parties since 1948 that these areas should constitute the Tamilian units of the Sri Lankan polity, whether federal or regional. But it should be understood clearly that the present Tamilian demand for physical safety and political security is not an empty verbal continuity of the earlier demand, but a terminal demand embodying within itself the quantitative and qualitative

changes that have taken place within this country since 1977.

In the pre-seventies, this demand, it should be accepted as a fact of political history, was not supported by all the Tamils. But the ethnic violence of 1977, 1978, 1981, 1982 and 1983 and the military operations in the North and the East since 1981 have made the demand for the safety of the Tamil regions the only hope for the demographic continuity of the Tamils within Sri Lanka. It is no more the demand of a political party; it is the determination of the entire ethnic group.

This is the text of the statement issued by the Co-ordinating Committee of the Citizens' Committee and endorsed by Teachers of the University of Jaffna.

The signatories are: Prof. K. Sivathamby, Chairman of the Co-ordinating Committee and Professor of Tamil, University of Jaffna and Mr. R. Balasubramaniam, Convener, Co-ordinating Committee and Attorney-at-Law.

Why has the concept of "the traditional Tamil homelands" assumed such significance?

The history of the ethnic violence from the sixties show that the various attacks by the Sinhalese on the Tamils have been not something like the Hindu, Muslim clashes of India, where two ethnic groups living side by side erupt into periodic violence and then cool-off and continue to live together. But here ethnic violence meant depriving the Tamils of their economic and social position in that area and driving them away from that area so that the Tamils could not resume the life they were used to earlier. Tamil shops were closed, Tamil families had to leave. The argument behind all those mofussil provincial violence had been that the Tamils should not be in any advantageous position in the traditional Sinhalese areas. Thus there had been a dislocation of Tamils from the Sinhalese areas.

## PROHIBITED AREA

The final blow was in July 1983 in Colombo. July 1983 proved that even in Colombo, where almost 50% of its population speak Tamils were not safe. It showed that the capital city, now the key to the benefits of the open-economy, was made a prohibited area for the Tamils.

The position now is that no Tamil is safe outside the Tamil areas. They cannot go back to those areas to resume their lives; the only exception being the middle level state employees. And events since 1983 have shown they are

often held as hostages whenever violence erupts in Tamil areas.

The Sri Lankan Tamil man is safe only in the North and the East.

This applies also to the Tamils of Indian origin, the bulk of whom are plantation labourers in the central region of the country. Whenever there had been ethnic attacks on them they had to get into the North and the East for their safety.

Thus it is the North and East that provides the physical safety for the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The most alarming factor in forcing the Tamils back to their

The question therefore would be what does it mean to a Tamil to be a Sri Lankan if his life and property are not safe. Any wavering on the part of the government to ensure the safety and security within their own areas is taken by the Tamil people as the indiscreet expression of the hidden aim to ultimately annihilate them. Fidelity to a country, or a constitution, or a person can come only out of confidence in it, or him. It is this lack of confidence that makes thousands of Tamils flee from Sri Lanka to India and European countries.

And that confidence in Sri Lanka can never be built up without providing the Tamils adequate safeguard to live as Tamils.

This explains the demand that the Tamil areas should constitute ONE UNIT within the Sri Lanka polity. The future of Sri Lanka depends not on demographic unification but on ethnic unity.

It should be remembered always that a common Sri Lankan identity cannot be fostered without accepting the specificities of the groups that constitute Sri Lanka. The acceptance of principle of traditional homelands and of the need to protect the rights of the minorities of each of the regions is crucial to the concept of Sri Lankan unity.

On the question of the acceptability of the political outcome to the Tamil youth, one need not labour the point too far. The composition of the Thimpu teams shows that without the youth agreeing no solution is possible. Our purpose here would be served adequately if we point out to just one fact, namely, the reason why the Tamil youth had taken up separatism as their political aim and violence as a means to that end. It was because they underwent experiences in the field of education and employment that they were not being treated equally as citizens of Sri Lanka. The ensuing military oppression demonstrated this further and swelled their ranks. It is important to convince them that they will not suffer the same fate anymore.

Any attempt at a political solution to the Sri Lankan Tamil question should instil confidence into the Tamil youth, that they would have nothing to lose by their Sri Lankan citizenship. If the government of Sri Lanka could decide to talk to them, then it is also its duty to convince them.

It is not our duty to spell how these are going to be done but it is our responsibility to emphasise that these are the things to be done.

areas has been that, while this was going on at provincial levels instigated by local vested interests the bureaucracy at the centre, with and sometimes even without political approval, had been active in changing the demographic pattern of certain areas in the North and the East. At first there were unobtrusive settlement expansions, sometimes they were revivals of Buddhist places of worship, and later they became outright demographic intrusions planted from above. It was by this process of demographic change, that Amparai was lost to the Muslims and Trincomalee is being taken away from the Tamils and Mannar is threatened.

And sometimes the administrative fiat was invoked to re-demarcate areas of local administration by which traditional Tamil areas were brought under Sinhala officialdom overnight.

Thus while on one hand the Tamils are pushed out of Sinhala areas, the Tamil areas themselves are Sinhalized.

It is in such a context of political and administrative hostility which draws its sustenance from an anti-Tamil bureaucracy that the Tamils today demand salvation. They want to be assured that they could live in their own areas.

The police and the military excesses, sporadic earlier, and since 1982 a permanent behavioural pattern of the armed forces have made it impossible for the Tamil people to stay in their own homes. The government has not been able to deny military excesses. These military excesses constitute in the preception of the Tamils, the Sinhala oppression of the Tamils.



# NEIGHBOURHOOD DIPLOMACY

In contemporary world, no country, however powerful, can chart its destiny absolutely alone. It has been the lesson of history that Governments can optimise their opportunities and enhance their capacity to shape events if they join with a group of countries with shared political and economic interests. Despite these advantages, the contemporary South Asian scene presents a picture of a house divided. The international relations of South Asia, since the advent of independence of member countries, have been characterised by mutual suspicions, unfriendly relations and at times, even open conflict.

What are the formidable obstacles in the way of South Asian co-operation? What are the sources of instability in the region? What are the linkages between domestic politics and external relations? What is the role of external powers in endangering the strategic environment in South Asia? In this essay, it is proposed to raise few of these questions and analyse some of the emerging trends.

The most striking feature of the South Asian scene in the pre-eminent position of India, which bestrides the region almost like a colossus. The largest and the most populous, it has all the potentials of emerging as one of the world's major powers by the turn of the century. In terms of area and demographic and economic resources, India is bigger than all the other countries put together. In 1982, according to the World Development Report, India had 72 per cent of the area, 73 per cent of the population and 77 per cent of the gross domestic product of the region. What is equally interesting is the fact that India is at the very centre and all the other countries are bordering on its periphery. India's neighbours among themselves have very few common attributes and their relations with each other—both economic and political—are very minimal. The crux of their diplomacy is how to gain maximum leverage vis-a-vis India, the central power in the region. In other words, India is the axis around which the wheel of South Asia revolves.

The common cultural heritage (India civilization, to use Prof. Arnold Toynbee's phrase), shared legacy of British colonial domination and identical problems of social and economic backwardness point to the underlying unity of South Asia; at the same time, to quote Mrs. Indira Gandhi's words, "each country has its individual personality, distinctive perception and a different political system." The religious, linguistic and ethnic bonds which cut across

national boundaries have given rise to complex problems of national integration and search for national identity. While each country is attempting to evolve its own majority-minority syndrome, it is also trying to maintain its psychological distance from India. Given the asymmetrical power structure in the region, it is but natural for India's smaller neighbours to be apprehensive of a possible domination by India. As a Sri Lankan scholar, Dr. Shelton Kodikara, points out regional cooperation must not lead to a "one way process" and should not lead to "dominance dependency relations." On the other hand, New Delhi feels that its smaller neighbours are deliberately involving the external powers in the region in order to reduce India's natural pre-eminence and cut her to size. This objective becomes evident if one analyses the background and motivations of political initiatives undertaken by India's smaller neighbours at regular intervals — Pakistan's quest for parity with India, its proposal for a nuclear weapon free South Asia zone, Nepal's zone of peace proposal and Colombo's suggestion for a nuclear weapon free Indian Ocean. It is also interesting to note that while India and Soviet Union have forged abiding friendship on the basis of convergence of interests (especially in South Asia), Moscow is viewed with suspicion by most of the South Asian capitals.

Stability and security are intimately intertwined with the nature of political systems prevailing in South Asian countries. While almost all countries started their political process with democratic forms of government, gradually democracy was derailed and except India and Sri Lanka, all other countries came under varying forms of authoritarianism. Democracy, even in the island republic of Sri Lanka, is subject to severe stresses and strains as a result of intensification of ethnic conflict during recent years. India's democracy and federal form of government—despite serious distortions and disabilities—are perceived as threat and source of destabilisation by authoritarian ruling elites of South Asia: What is more, Indian interference becomes a convenient red herring whenever the rulers are faced with popular demands of democratisation and deteriorating internal situation. It is equally interesting to highlight the fact that while Indian national leadership thanks to the genius of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru—deliberately discarded the

religion of the majority community as the basis of nationhood and preferred to pursue a policy of cultural pluralism by introducing a federal form of government: in many countries religious fanaticism and denial of minority rights have increasingly come to the fore. Here again the forces of secularism and democratisation look to India as a model, where as more often than not, suppression of democratic rights is paralleled with accusations of Indian interference.

Another consequence flows out of the Indo-centric character of South Asia. Most of the contentious issues which vitiate the political atmosphere are and would continue to be bilateral. Issues relating to demarcation of boundaries, the Kashmir question, problems relating to people of Indian origin in Sri Lanka, presence of Sri Lankan Tamil militants in India, refugees from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka—all these are bilateral. What is more deterioration in bilateral relations casts a shadow over regional co-operation as evident from Colombo's decision to boycott the SARC meeting in Thimpu. To the relief of all South Asia, Sri Lanka relented and finally attended the meeting.

by Dr. V. Suryanarayan

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University of Madras.*

The lesson is clear—without improvement in India's relations with its neighbours regional cooperation in South Asia cannot make much headway.

The underlying cause of regional stability in South Asia is the inability of India and Pakistan to settle their differences amicably. Since independence in 1947, India-Pakistan relations have taken a zig zag course leading to open hostilities in 1947, 1965 and 1971 the two countries still remain trapped in a vicious circle of distrust and antagonism. The differences between the two states are many and consequently their mutual perceptions vary. To cite few examples, Pakistan is based on the two nation theory, whereas Indian nationalist leadership considered partition as a price to be paid for independence. The Indian state is based on the bedrock of secularism. There are today more Muslims in India than in Pakistan. Secondly, while Pakistan within a decade of independence, came under authoritarian rule India still remains a parliamentary democracy. Thirdly, Pakistani ruling elite have frequently expressed the fear of India's "hegemonistic de-

signs" in the subcontinent; New Delhi is frequently accused of attempts to undo partition either directly through war or indirectly through support to secessionist forces. This feeling got particularly sharpened after the emergence of Bangladesh. As a result, India is the most decisive factor in the shaping of Pakistan's foreign policy. On the other hand, New Delhi has taken a global view in its foreign policy formulations. Fourth, while India pursued the policy of non-alignment, Pakistan became a member of US alliance system. It began with the induction of Pakistan into CENTO and SEATO and spurring of arms race in the sub-continent in the mid 1950's with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan has again been roped into the "strategic consensus" against the USSR and a second arms race has begun in the sub-continent. If the recent history is of any relevance, it clearly shows that the arms which Islamabad received in the past to "combat communism" have been used only against India. While Pakistan has every right to defend its national interests against all possible threats, New Delhi feels that US supply of arms to Pakistan is disproportionate to its requirements.

Not only has it destabilised the military balance, it has also imposed a formidable financial burden on India. In this context, the talk of a no war pact, balanced reduction of forces, mutual inspection of nuclear energy installations etc. are intended mainly to score debating points against New Delhi in Western capitals. Lastly, the possibility of Pakistan going nuclear looms large as a dangerous development from the Indian standpoint.

Bangladesh, which is surrounded by Indian territory on all sides except for a short southeastern border with Burma and a southern coast jutting into the Bay of Bengal, is another illustration of a neighbouring country being a distant neighbour. It is all the more saddening because India expended considerable resources and manpower in the liberation of Bangladesh. The political destabilisation in Bangladesh, following the assassination of Mujibur Rahman in 1975, has generally coincided with the growth of anti-Indian feelings. The ruling elites in Dacca have frequently accused



# IN SOUTH ASIA

India as the source of destabilisation by providing arms and training to the guerrillas and setting up training camps within Indian territory. India, on its part, has denied these allegations with equal vehemence, but New Delhi continues to be accused for a variety of Bangladesh's ailments from illegal smuggling to fomenting the insurgent activities of Chakma tribals. At the same time, it must be pointed out that New Delhi maintains its right to grant political asylum: there is also widespread sympathy in India, cutting across party affiliations, for those forces struggling for democratisation in neighbouring countries. The thorny issues bedwilling bilateral relations — Ganga waters, fence on India-Bangladesh border, ownership of New Moore island and demarcation of maritime boundary—continue to elude easy solutions. What is of equal concern to India is the fact that Northeast India is getting increasingly destabilised as a result of international developments in Bangladesh. The problem in Assam is a direct offshoot of illegal migration from Bangladesh. The stability of India's borders in the northeast will depend upon the turn of events across India's borders in Bangladesh.

Indo-Nepalese relations are primarily governed by India's security considerations in the Himalayan region: the security dimensions were reinforced with the deterioration of Sino-Indian relations in the 1950's. The landlocked country's peculiar geographic location and its overwhelming dependence on India for survival makes it extremely sensitive to Indian interference; media and leadership in Nepal frequently accuse India of being a "big brother". The widespread sympathy and even open support for the forces of democracy in Nepal provides additional justification that India is interfering in the internal affairs of that country. In addition to Indian interference, real or imaginary, the bilateral relations have also been adversely affected by Kathmandu's dissatisfaction with the terms of Indo-Nepalese Treaty of Trade and Transit: India's disinclination to support King Birendra's proposal that Nepal be declared a zone of peace, seasonal floodings in Nepal as a result of embankments constructed on the Indian side of the border and restrictions imposed by India on the movement of Nepalese in specified areas of Northeast India. Resolution of bilateral conflicts will depend as to whether the leadership of the two countries has the necessary political will to open a new era of understanding.

The security factor applies with greater force in India's relations with Bhutan, governed as they are by the Treaty of 1949. India naturally will be worried with any attempts — internal or external — which tries to convert this sensitive Himalayan kingdom into a cockpit of international intrigue. Fortunately, as far as Maldives is concerned, differences in size and resources not stood in the way of benign interaction. Maldives is strategically important to India and it can gain considerably by forging economic links with India.

The long standing friendship between India Sri Lanka received a serious jolt as a result of ethnic conflict in 1983. Given the racial, linguistic and cultural affinities between Tamilnadu and Tamil minority groups in Sri Lanka, there is understandable concern in Tamilnadu over the developments in the island. The competitive nature of Tamilnadu politics, with the DMK and AIADMK vying with one another in championing the causes of overseas Tamils, and the widespread sympathy for Sri Lankan Tamil cause are important factors which cannot be ignored by New Delhi. The presence of TULF leadership and large number of Tamil militants in Tamilnadu have sparked strong reactions from influential sections of Sinhalese population. Indian denial of training camps in India has not made any appreciable difference to the overall situation. It must also be pointed out that what is happening in Sri Lanka is not strictly the domestic problem of Sri Lanka alone and India has vital stakes in the preservation of political stability in the island. The security of thousands of stateless people of Indian origin and Indian citizens to be repatriated to India is naturally of great concern to New Delhi. Though the Indian Tamils are politically aligned to the UNP and have nothing to do with the dem and for Tamil Eelam, they became defenceless victims of violence during recent years. The influx of nearly 100,000 refugees into Tamilnadu has its own repercussions not only in terms of administrative problems but also in sharpening public opinion in Tamilnadu. Compounding the complex situation is the internationalisation of the dispute and entry of external forces into Sri Lanka which will have serious repercussions on India's geo-political and strategic environment. The induction of Mossad, the arrangements with British private agencies to train Sinhalese armed forces, manifestations of increasing US interest in Sri Lanka as is evident from the Voice of Ame-

rica deal — all these will have serious implications for India-Sri Lanka relations.

As far as the ethnic conflict is concerned, New Delhi has repeatedly offered its good offices in the direction of an honourable and amicable settlement. It was diplomatic finesse of G. Parthasarathy, at the first instance, which enabled the convening of the Round Table Conference. It was due to New Delhi's good offices the TULF was persuaded to come to the negotiating table though the Party had decided in the Mannar Convention in July 1983 not to have any more talks with government. From their mandate for an independent state, the Party has scaled down its demands to a union of states within the framework of a united Sri Lanka. The hopes that many entertained that a workable solution to the ethnic problem would emerge out of the conference soon belied and the pendulum began to swing between violence by the Tamil militants and counter violence by the state. Again, thanks to New Delhi's offices, a ceasefire has been arranged recently. The next few weeks would unfold whether the Sri Lankan government and various Sinhalese forces on one side and TULF and Tamil militants on the other will rise to the occasion and make necessary accommodation to arrive at an amicable settlement or whether the Re-public would plunge itself into a civil war.

Given above mentioned political realities of South Asia, it must be underlined that there is a certain co-relationship between India and the domestic developments in South Asian countries. In the same way, these countries can also influence the political developments within India. Thus, there is a nexus between Bangladesh and Assam, Sri Lanka and Tamilnadu, Pakistan and Kashmir, Pakistan and Punjab and Nepal and contiguous Indian states. An acceptance of this stark reality and working out a mean-

ingful interaction on that basis can alone lead to healthy interstate relations in South Asia. Certain illustrations can be cited to prove point. India's assistance was sought and readily given to save the monarchy in Nepal from the attempted coup of the Ranas. During the political crisis in Sri Lanka in the early 1970's as a result of JVP insurrection, Mrs. Bandaranaike sought external assistance, including India, which was spontaneously given. It is also possible to argue that if Yahya Khan and Pakistani leadership were more appreciative of East Bengali aspirations and worked in conjunction with India, the history of Pakistan might have been different.

One can understand and appreciate the fears and misgivings that a small country entertains towards its big neighbour. Unfortunately, the South Asian countries to involve external powers or become vulnerable to super power manipulation in their desire to offset India's so called hegemonistic designs. No country in South Asia by itself is a security threat to India but as a result of external involvement India's strategic environment is becoming increasingly critical which is a matter of serious concern to New Delhi. In this connection, the South Asian countries must draw lessons from the experience of super powers. Though their defence production and military capabilities have increased manifold, their political clout around the world has steadily declined. The heroic struggle of Vietnam against the United States and Soviet inability to put down Afghan resistance are clear pointers of super power inability to stem the tide of nationalism in Asia. Regional cooperation can succeed only if it is based on mutual trust, reciprocity and realism.

## THEY REMEMBER

Expatriate Tamils who are old students of the Wesleyan Mission Hartley College, Point Pedro, will on 1st September observe the first anniversary of the destruction caused to their 150 year-old college library and science laboratories by arson by the Security forces.

Due to their close proximity to the Point Pedro Police Station and the Special Commando Unit stationed at it, Hartley College and the Methodist Girls' High School students have refused to attend classes at their respective school premises and hence these two educational institutions are forced to function elsewhere.

Students and educationists agitated over the wanton destruction of the library have expressed doubts

whether the Government would render any assistance to restore and reconstitute the library because, by past experience, they knew that although the Lionel Fernando Commission recommended the payment of Rs. 10.2 million compensation to the Jaffna Public Library, destroyed by arson by the Security Forces on 1st June 1981, the money has not been released so far.

An eminent educationist, Mr. K. Nestah expressed the view that monies allocated for local development should not be diverted for the restoration of the Hartley College Library but it should come from the Central funds for that purpose. (Vide SATURDAY REVIEW of 8th, 15th and 22nd September 1984.



# PLENTY OF IDIOCY

Editor  
SATURDAY REVIEW

During this period of communal truce, it would have been good if the leaders of the contending parties had refrained from provocative comments. Most of the letter came from the Sinhala leaders, I am sorry to have to say.

One such man, a Minister to boot, said that the "terrorists" had agreed to the truce because they knew they could not win. If anyone deserves a prize for the stupidest comment made during this time of anxiety, this man deserves it: If I were a "terrorist," I would do my best to make the man feel sorry for the remark, because in the circumstances I would suspend my activities only because I wished to be reasonable and help to solve the problem rationally, and not because I knew I would not win. When I am on what I believe is a just crusade, there is no winning or losing for me; I would do all for the cause even give my life for it!

Another politician recently advised the students of a school not to listen to the older people, merely repeating what they said, but to work out things for themselves. On that line of logic, the first thing the children should do, is to ignore the advice of that old man! Of course we all know that young people need the advice and guidance of their elders. That is why the Sinhala proverb "Respect your elders" is observed by most of the non-Christian children and many of the Christian ones try to keep the commandment "Honour thy father and mother".

The second point that arises is that, going on that man's advice, while public servants are compulsorily retired at 55 years of age, politicians (with the exception of those like Mr. J. R. Jeyewardene, Dr. W. Dahanayake and some leaders of the opposition) should be compulsorily retired at 50 years of age. For one thing, a person like the man who said what I mentioned above, has lost his faith in human nature, and for another, is apparently a disgruntled old-timer himself who has lost the "joie de vivre" that young people have: he wishes to urge young people to do irresponsible things, quite more serious than doing them oneself!

Reminds me of the political tyro in the 1950s who misunderstood the plea of Dr. N.M. Perera for "parity" on the language issue, as a demand for separatism, declaring with juvenile idocy that if the Tamils wanted separation he would lead a Sinhala army to Jaffna! O tempore! O mor-

es! Or to put it in the Sinhala idiom "Kaata Kiyannede".

Neville H. de Silva  
Colombo 5

## POPPYCOCK!

The Editor  
SATURDAY REVIEW

At an election meeting at Mul-kirigala, Mr. Anura Bandaranaike is reported to have stated, in the midst of a tirade against the Tamils, that Tamils had Tamilnadu to go to, and the Muslims West Asia, while the Buddhist Sinhalese had nowhere but Sri Lanka. Don't the Sinhalese have Bangladesh, if the Tamils have Tamilnadu? And if the Muslims have their co-religionists in West Asia, cannot the Buddhists seek Asia?

Ancient burial urns and other artefacts excavated in this country show that Tamils have been in this island even as early as

In their endeavour to secure justice and fairplay, they were driven from pillar to post. Since all their peaceful efforts failed, some militant youths resorted willy-nilly to violence as a last weapon in order to achieve their objectives. Whether they have been right or wrong in their venture only future history will decide.

But violence from any quarter is condemnable. For violence breeds more violence and promotes hatred and animosity, as witnessed in the present scenario.

Let the gory past be now buried. Let us adopt a down-to-earth and realistic approach to the crisis-ridden situation in the country without being Mahavamsa-minded or trying to revive bitter memories of unsavoury episodes like that of Duttugemunu and Elara.

What is now needed is a new and constructive approach to rebuild the scattered nation. For this purpose all the forces in the country

# LETTERS

3000 B. C. This was long before the Sinhalese advent in 500 B. C. The history of the Muslims in Sri Lanka is said to date from the 3rd century A. D., and it could be much earlier.

Anura would do well to look into his family tree.

K. R. Chellappah  
Vaddukoddai

## BURY THE PAST

The Editor  
SATURDAY REVIEW

It is heartening to note from a recent press report that the Leader of the Opposition Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, in a chastened and contrite mood, has squarely blamed all Governments since Independence for the current ethnic crisis in the country.

Party politics in this country has wrought much havoc. It is the rivalry between the two major ruling parties to wrest political power somehow or other which has militated against a reasonable solution to the many problems of the Tamils including plantation Tamils.

should be united. The earnest and sincere co-operation of all political parties, the Buddhist laity and clergy, secular and religious organisations, the newspapers constituting the fourth estate and others is indispensable.

It is fervently hoped that the Tamil leaders and the militant groups will suitably respond to any worthwhile and reasonable proposals for a negotiated settlement in the present context of affairs.

Dr. K. Subramaniam  
Colombo 6

## THE "SET UP"

Editor  
SATURDAY REVIEW

Recent events seem to prove the doubts certain quarters entertained—that the Government is not keen on solving the ethnic problem. The merger of the North and the East, at present, a subject of dispute, is a thorny issue for the Government. It is to overcome this that a self-crowned leader of a community has been set up to protest on the merger. Reliable reports from Abdul Cafoor Mawatha indicate several visits by the private secretary of a V. I. P. to promote the "Set Up".

It is sad that while India has statesmen, who solve problems by "give and take", thousands die in Sri Lanka for want of one.

N. Narian  
Vaddukoddai

## CRASS BIAS

Editor  
SATURDAY REVIEW

The Department of Immigration and Emigration of this Island discriminates and ill-treats the Tamil passport applicants very badly by, insisting on them to submit additional documents, viz: certificates of character by the Grama sevaka, countersigned by the A. G. A. of the area, voters list extract, horoscope, etc., etc.

As a result, the Tamil applicants are forced to spend their wealth and health and time in vain to obtain the additional certificates.

All the Tamils are not illicit immigrants or stateless or dangerous criminals. It appears that the Department suspects the nationality of the Tamils' birth certificate, submitted with the passport applications.

Besides, they humiliate the persons who certified the passport applications about the nationality of the applications well.

Repeated representations made to the Controller had been unheeded and unreplyed. Instead, he issues press releases and radio news stating that there is no discriminations in his Department at all.

The Department sends letters in Sinhala only, and it is difficult to understand the contents in rural villages, as there is no one who can read them.

A.R.R. Kumar  
Chundukuli

## NON-SENSE

Editor  
SATURDAY REVIEW

The Ministry of Education conducted an examination in October last year and held interviews in December to recruit primary Maths/Science and English assistant teachers.

A part of the Tamil candidates selected had a three weeks pre-service training in Kandy and Maharagama during the last school vacation. The rest of the eligible Tamil candidates were told that they would be called for training during the August school vacation. The August vacation started on 2nd August, but so far no letters have been received.

Instead of sending the Tamil candidates to other far away places for training why do not the authorities concerned make arrangements to have the training in the Training Colleges in Batticaloa and Jaffna? This would reduce the travelling expenses of both the candidates and the lecturers, the cost of security arrangements during the training, etc.

Chavakachcheri — P. J.



# MASS ASSEMBLY FOR PEACE

This is a translation of the lead article which appeared in the independent Sinhala weekly 'JANA-HANDA' of 7th July.

People in the North as well as the South would welcome the decision to stop the armed conflict, even temporarily, and to seek a peaceful solution to the National Question which has become accentuated over a number of years and which has led to the loss of thousands of valuable lives and destruction of property.

It is also a truism to say that most people are hoping that these talks would quickly lead to a permanent peaceful solution to the National Question. The current discussions are particularly important because not only the Tamil United Liberation Front but also the representatives of the armed groups in the North are also participating in them. It shows that the Government, which had hitherto over-estimated its military capacity, has now come to terms with reality.

This was not a wrong move. In the context of spiralling costs of military action, the subjection of not only Tamils but also Sinhalese to more and repressive laws, the killing of thousands of innocent people, resorting to inhuman torture in order to obtain information, the decision to abandon the militarist line and seek a peaceful solution was a prudent step. The decision of the Government, even belatedly to aban-

don the erroneous and shortsighted view that there can be no talks until terrorism is eliminated, would be welcomed by the vast mass of people.

This is a historic occasion. This is not the time to engage in boastful rhetoric. To whip up racism again and thus prevent, the realisation of a peaceful solution is a crime against humanity. We should not be fooled by the empty rhetoric of persons like Mr. Anura Bandaranaike and Mr. Dinesh Goonewardene, because their real object is not that protection of the interests of the Sinhalese people but an attempt to exploit the situation for their own political advantage regardless of what happens to the people.

In particular, important Ministers and Members of Parliament must refrain from making irresponsible statements because they may prevent a peaceful accord. According to newspaper reports of a speech made by Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali at Welegedera, Kurunegala, he is supposed to have said that "terrorists came for discussions because they could not win; had they thought they could win they would not have agreed to attend the talks". If this report is true, it is a very imprudent statement.

If the "terrorists" came for discussions because they could not win, would it not be correct to conclude that the government also agreed for discussions because it could not de-

feat the "terrorists". In 1979 did not the Government give Brigadier Weeraratne the task of "eliminating terrorism" by 31st December that year? Thereafter, how many times did the government promise to defeat terrorism in a month, six months, a year etc.?

But everyone knows how the question became more acute each day. The struggle spread from the North to the East. There were wholesale arrest of Tamil youths. And yet the Government did not succeed in defeating terrorism. Therefore this is not time to make empty boasts. All our efforts should be directed to transform this temporary peace into permanent one.

When responsible ministers resort to such empty phrase-mongering, one wonders whether the Government has a genuine intention of bringing about a peaceful solution. Everyone knows what happened to the All-party conference. Therefore, it is unwise to hope that through the Government initiative alone we could achieve a peaceful solution and for peace loving masses to do nothing about it. Moreover even if the Government comes forward with a set of proposals, in order to implement them, the people must accept them. Those implemented by deceiving the people are not likely to last very long.

Furthermore, even proposals that are agreed upon by the

Government and the representatives of the Tamil people may not be presented to Parliament because the Government may consider it politically disadvantageous to do so in the face of opposition from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the clergy. For a variety of such reasons, it might become difficult to achieve a peaceful solution. Therefore, it is unwise to expect solution to the National Question only through the initiative of the Government.

The time has come for those who are seeking a peaceful solution and in particular mass organisations, to take positive action. Today, only some political opportunists, who are seeking to whip up chauvinism are expressing their views. Those who seek a peaceful solution must occupy the centre of the stage now. If we neglect this duty consequences for this country may be very tragic.

All organisations who seek peace should put forward alternative proposals for a political solution. In order to ensure the direct participation of people in the peace process, organisations such as the MIRJE, Citizens Committee for National Harmony, United Religious Organisation, Women for peace, Trade Unions, Political and Community Organisations must take the initiative to call a mass assembly for peace.

## News Briefs

### GA'S ASSURANCE

The Govt. Agent Jaffna, Mr. V.M. Panchalingam gave an assurance to the Coordinating Committee of Displaced Employees, at its first annual general meeting held recently at the Malayan Ceylonese Association Hall, Jaffna, that he would render all possible assistance to the displaced persons. Efforts would be made, he said, for the issue of food stamps or dry rations to the very badly affected people.

Messrs. K. Visvalingham, Chairman TRRO, R. Balasubramaniam, Secretary, Jaffna Citizens Committee and V. Sivarajah, Secretary CTU Jaffna, also addressed the gathering.

After the ratification of the new constitution, the following were elected office-bearers: R. Rajasingham (President), K. Balasubramaniam and N. Balakrishnan (Vice-Presidents), A. S. Moorthy (Secret-

ary), P. Kumarasingham (Asst. Secretary) and M. S. Shanmugarajah (Treasurer).

### ON PAR NOW

The Ministry of Education has now decided to pay Indian and London Science Graduates the new salary scale paid to Honours, Science, Maths, English, Education, Diploma in Education, BEd Graduates of Sri Lankan Universities as recommended by the Dayaratne Salaries Committee, according to a press release issued by Mr. H. N. Fernando, General Secretary of the Ceylon Teachers' Union.

The press release states this decision was made after union representatives held several discussions with the officials of the Ministry of Education.

The CTU along with its Jaffna Branch and the N.P.T.A. had for a long time urged the Ministry to pay the Indian and London Science Graduates the Honours Graduate Salary scale paid to Science Graduates of Sri Lankan Universities.

### MARADANA THE TERMINUS

From Wednesday (14th August), the up and down Night Mail trains, the Yal Devi from Colombo and the Uttara Devi from KKS run bet-

ween Maradana (not Colombo Fort) and KKS. Between Vavuniya and Kankesanthurai, these trains stop at Mankulam, Kilinochchi, Pallai, Kodikamam and Jaffna.

## CANTABIA PROUDLY ANNOUNCES ITS NEW VENTURE — CORRESPONDENCE COURSE IN ENGLISH VIA TAMIL

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# Saturday Review

SRI LANKA

## Shooting Spree, Arson in Vavuniya

A bomb blast in Vavuniya which killed a police Sub-Inspector and four Policemen led to massive reprisals in which ten civilians were killed, over 21 seriously injured and over fifty shops and houses burnt down. One of the houses which was badly damaged was the residence of the former TULF M. P. for Vavuniya, Mr. T. Sivasithamparam. An employee of the Milk Board who was in the house at the time was shot dead.

The bomb incident occurred round about 8 a. m., on Saturday 10th August. Following this the Vavuniya Police had allegedly gone on a shooting spree killing and injuring civilians. A low-flying helicopter too, buzzed the area, spraying bullets.

The dead persons are:

K. Singaravelu (63) farmer, K. Santhirasekaram, (27), worker, C. Sellathurai (38), worker, C. Nagalingam (33), worker, M. Muniandi (54), worker, S. Nadarasapillai (42), Milk Board employee, S. Ramaraj (45), fruit seller, V. Govindarajah, vegetable seller, P. Vilvarajah ((22), vegetable seller, and V. Thevadas (20), Lorry cleaner.

The Inquirer into sudden Deaths, Mr. R. D. Vilvarajah,

who held the inquest returned a verdict of homicide.

The Vavuniya Citizens Committee has estimated the damage caused to shops by arson at Rupees ten million.

On Sunday night, nine houses belonging to Tamils living at Rambaikulam, Vavuniya were burnt down and the inmates were forced to take refuge in the premises of St. Anthony's Church.

The Security Forces barricaded the streets on Monday, 12th August, and carried out a search. Traffic virtually came to a standstill and most people stayed indoors.

National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali paid a surprise visit to Vavuniya on Monday.

Last week-end's violence in Vavuniya left 73 shops and 19 houses completely burnt, according to the G. A. Vavuniya, Mr. K. C. Logeswaran.

The statistics also reveal that 7 shops and 5 houses were partly burnt, 3 shops and 4 houses damaged and 3 shops looted.

Government buildings housing the Milk Board and the Carpentry Training Centre were damaged too.

## Refugees Shot Dead

An unidentified gun-toting gang shot dead eight Tamil refugees at the Thiriyai Refugee Camp on Saturday, 10th August. The dead persons are:

Mahadeva, School Principal, Ehambaram, A. Thurainayagam, Narayanapillai, former Grama Sevaka, M. S. Sanmugam, A. Sivanayagam, Yoganathan and Tharmarajah.

They were shot dead while playing cards in front of the Thiriyai Tamil Maha Vidyalayam which has been converted into a Refugee Camp.

## Farm Buildings Wrecked

Twenty six buildings housed in the Government owned Karadiyanaru Agricultural Farm, about sixteen miles from Batticaloa, were blasted on Sunday, 11th August morning. The buildings, wrecked by bombs, included the Agricultural Research Centre, Lecture Hall and the Training Centre.

The blasting which began on Saturday night round about 10 o'clock went on till 3 a.m., on Sunday.

The Security Forces were to have set up Camp at the Farm.

## Local Autonomy for Muslims: EPRLF Proposal

The Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) has put forward the following proposals to allay the fears — due to misunderstandings — among sections of the Muslim people regarding the Eelam Liberation struggle:

- Demarcation of the areas where there is a concentration of Muslims.

- Recognition of these areas as Muslim areas.

- Setting up of a Muslim People's Council consisting of representatives who will reflect the interests of the Muslims living in these areas.

- Recognition of this Council as the political forum of the Muslim people and guaranteeing implementation of local autonomy in the Muslim areas through it.

- Making provision through this Council for Muslim representation

at the political leadership level of Eelam.

- With the consent and advice of this Council, taking all measures to protect and foster the Islamic Religion, Art, Culture, tradition, the Arabic language, Education, employment opportunities, local development and to meet other basic needs.

- The Eelam Government shall seek the advice of the Muslim People's Council in respect of each and every measure, however small, connected with the Muslim people.

The EPRLF concludes its press release with the declaration that the guarantee of a secure and prosperous future for the Muslim people lies in an independent Eelam and calls upon them to link themselves with the Eelam Liberation struggle.

## Devolution The Urgent Need

The text of a statement issued by the Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka:

The Civil Rights Movement has, over the past three years, continually drawn the attention of government to numerous infringements of the fundamental and civil rights of the people by way of arbitrary arrests and detentions, 'disappearances', inhuman treatment and torture of those held in custody, extra-judicial killings and excesses by the security forces of the state that have resulted in enormous and grievous loss of life and property. CRM has also placed these infringements in the context of the continuing situation of ethnic conflict in which members of the security forces and, more recently, civilians, have been attacked and killed by armed separatists. In CRM's view this situation has arisen through the neglect of successive governments to give attention to a problem which could have been solved before violence escalated and positions become more hardened. CRM has continued to urge the search for a political solution as a more appropriate means for the government to fulfil its duty to all citizens than the pursuit of the military option.

In this context, CRM welcomes the cease-fire between the government and the separatists and the negotiations now proceeding at Thimpu in Bhutan. CRM also welcomes the government's release, before the next round of talks, of the 643 persons held without charge at the Boosa detention camp.

An acceptable political solution will have to provide for a meaningful devolution of power. Such a devolution has been resorted to in many countries as a practicable, suitable, fair and democratic means of governing. This is particularly so when within the country there are various ethnic groups. Devolution in no way contradicts the concept of the unitary state nor does it undermine it. On the contrary its tendency is to strengthen unity by accommodating the legitimate interest of minority groups, and thereby strengthening nation building.

But this is not the only reason for devolution, nor the only context in which it is known to take place. Devolution facilitates better participation by the people in the process of government, and is therefore more democratic. When certain state powers are exercised at the local level, people can share in the formulation of policy and its implementation. Such democratic structures at the local level will also provide for greater participation at the national level. The central government will thus be kept aware of and made more responsive to local needs.

CRM does not as an organisation suggest any particular model of devolution. It wishes at this juncture only to stress the need to pursue this search with determination and to seek a model which will not only satisfy the legitimate needs and aspirations of the Tamil people of our country, which will not only enable all inhabitants to live free from fear, but which will also result in the enjoyment by all Sri Lankans of a greater degree of civil liberty and freedom than they now have.