

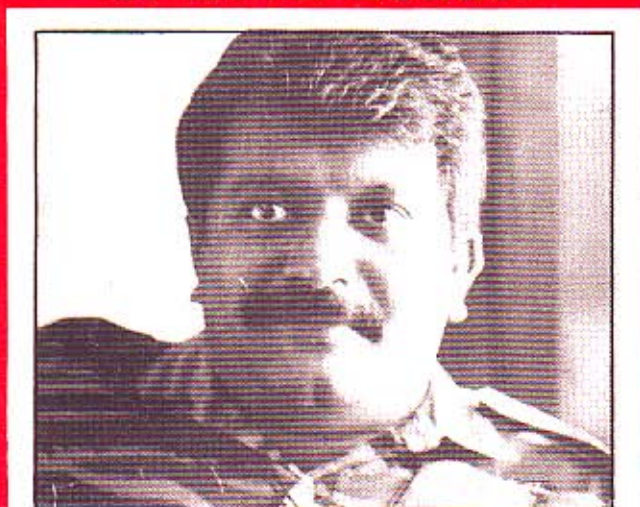
Tamil TIMES

Vol XIV No.6 ISSN 0266-4488 15 JUNE 1995 90 p

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

UK/India/Sri Lanka.....£15/\$25
Australia..... Aus\$45
Canada Can\$40
USA\$35
All Other Countries £20/US\$35

New Delhi Seeks Extradition of LTTE Leader



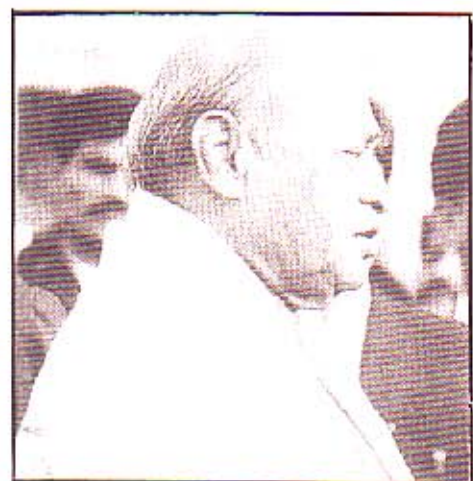
LTTE Leader Mr. V. Pirabhakaran

- ★ **A Dream Turning into a Nightmare**
- ★ **On Understanding Self-Determination**
- ★ **Economic Plan Derailed as Defence Spending Rises**
- ★ **Academics Disappointed**

★ **The Suicidal Game of War and Peace**

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★ **Looming Large in Tamil Nadu Politics**



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*I do not agree with a word
of what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it.*

— Voltaire.

Tamil TIMES

ISSN 0266-4488

Vol. XIV No. 6

15 JUNE 1995

Published by

TAMIL TIMES LTD
P.O. BOX 121
SUTTON, SURREY SM1 3TD
UNITED KINGDOM

Phone: 0181-644 0972

Fax: 0181-241 4557

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

UK/India/Sri Lanka £15/US\$25
Australia..... Aus\$45
Canada Can\$40
USA US\$35
All other countries..... £20/US\$35

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A Dream Turning Into A Nightmare

Judging from the events since fighting resumed on April 19 between the Tamil Tigers and government forces following the withdrawal of the LTTE from both the peace process and the cessation of hostilities, Eelam War III promises to be more gruesome, grisly and ghastly than the two that preceded. The death toll on either side, including among innocent civilians, within a matter of seven weeks has risen to a staggering figure of over 600. That is approximately 85 human beings each week. By any standard of conflicts around the world, that must surely be a record.

One question that must be asked from those who are responsible for the sacrifice of this enormous number of human lives is a short and simple one: Has your aim of reaching your declared goal been advanced one iota in any meaningful and practical terms because of so many sacrifices made in such short space of time?

It is reported that the LTTE has exacted a heavy price against the military particularly in eastern Sri Lanka. On the other hand, government forces claim that they have advanced a further six or seven kilometres beyond the perimeter of the Palaly Airbase and brought under its control another village, Atchuveli, in northern Jaffna which has resulted in the displacement of several thousands of Tamil civilians in the ensuing battles.

The government has not made it a secret that it is engaging in a programme of arms purchases. It is seeking assistance from foreign countries to prosecute the war effort. The government which cut its defence budget in January this year in the context of peace talks with the LTTE has now been compelled to allocate additional funds. A National Defence Fund has been set up. The government says that it is not necessary to discuss with the LTTE because the LTTE unilaterally broke the cessation of hostilities and withdrew from peace process. On the other hand, the LTTE has intensified its campaign of recruitment of young Tamils. The LTTE states that if the government 'adopts a military option, it will have disastrous consequences for the whole country'.

The recent burning of scores of Tamil-owned shops orchestrated by extremist elements in the southern town of Galle following the killing of 42 civilians and a Buddhist monk in the east allegedly by the Tigers demonstrated the sheer vulnerability of Tamils and their property in the context of the ongoing conflict. It must be noted that the number of Tamils who have taken up residence in Colombo and its suburbs primarily due to the violence in the northeast are estimated to be four times more than the number who were living in July 1983 when they became victims of the most atrocious communal conflagration in the island's history. People are already talking about the danger of a repeat of the tragedy of July 1983.

It is evident that extremist chauvinist elements in the south of the ilk of Nalin de Silva and Gamini Iriyagolle are gradually coming to the surface and anti-government newspapers are only too willing to give them undeserved space to peddle their racist poison turning an already bad situation even worse. Having remained powerless and irrelevant in the background during the currency of the peace process, they have now begun their diabolical work of fanning the flames of communal discord and violence.

The bleak and bloody situation has been further complicated by the Indian government's request to the Sri Lankan government to extradite the LTTE leader and two of his associates in connection with their alleged involvement in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the former Indian Premier. Questions have been raised as to why New Delhi made the request at this moment in time. The internal squabbles and the problems facing Indian Premier Narasimha Rao in the ruling Congress Party have been suggested as the motivating factors. Whether that is true or not, the Sri Lankan government has at least been confronted with a situation in which it has to deal with the request in a formal and legal context of applicable extradition laws. The complicating fallout from the Indian request, however academic and impossible of fulfillment it may be, in respect of any prospect of future negotiations between the government and the LTTE cannot be underestimated.

The dream of all those who wish to see a negotiated peaceful resolution of the conflict has turned into a nightmare as the fighting continues with renewed vengeance accompanied by an unprecedented degree of carnage.

Delhi Seeks Extradition of LTTE Leader

from Rita Sebastian, in Colombo

India has finally requested the extradition of Tamil Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran after a long period of weighing the political pros and cons.

It is being argued in some quarters, that Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao was virtually pushed to act following the recent interview given by Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunge to an Indian news magazine where she accused Prabhakaran of 'Killing Gandhi in cold blood'.

This raised temperatures in Delhi and 123 Congress Members of Parliament, in a demonstration of political loyalties and correctness, demanded the extradition of Prabhakaran.

Rao's hand was forced by another factor, namely the split in the Congress engineered by his former Minister, Arjun Singh, also clamouring for the extradition of the Tiger leader.

Narasimha Rao was therefore, from all accounts, forced to defend his political flank. From then on events moved swiftly to 3 messengers arriving in Colombo, armed with a dossier and handing it over to the Sri Lankan Foreign Office.

The extensive documentation was the culmination of 4 years of investigative labour.

The question is, what now? Extradition is now, as it was before, merely an academic exercise since as the government itself admitted not long ago, Prabhakaran will first have to be apprehended. And how that can be done is the million dollar question.

Meanwhile as the war mongers enjoy a field day in the local press and on public platforms, the casualty toll in the current phase of the conflict keeps rising.

Although speculation was rife during the recent visits to Colombo of Australian Foreign Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, and Canadian Secretary of State for Asia Pacific, Raymond Chan, that they would try and mediate in the conflict, nothing concrete apparently was on offer. Senator Evans told the press that 'Mediation was not on his

repertoire' and that the conflict cried for internal resolution.

But with the Tigers firm on their stand that the 4 demands made during the last round of negotiations have to be met before talks can resume, mediation is an unlikely prospect at the moment. Besides, Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar made it known in a recent interview that the war will have to be carried into the Tiger camp so that the impression is not created that the government is ready to abdicate.

Notwithstanding Kadirgamar's statement, President Chandrika Kumaratunga is still determined not to give 'The raring to go' military the go-ahead for an all-out military offensive. She is still pinning her hopes on the devolution package that will appease the Tamil demand for a separate homeland in the island's northeast provinces.

But there are so many factors she will have to contend with once the political package is made public. The Sinhala chauvinists, routed at the last elections, will raise their heads again to whip up communal passions. Besides the Muslim minority will demand equal power-sharing arrangements in the northeast.

Will winning 62% of the vote at the Presidential election, which has been interpreted as a mandate for peace be able to ride the storm that will erupt, when devolution comes to be discussed. Federalism and a merged northeast province seem to be the twin bogeys.

What is needed at this point in time is a change of attitudes, of accommodation and compromise if one wants to see an end to the war which President Kumaratunga said had already claimed over 50,000 lives.

Thondaman Under Attack

Sauvami moorthy Thondaman, the 82-year-old patriarch of the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC), and a member of the Kumaratunga cabinet sought to justify his interview in India comparing LTTE leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran with Indian leader Bhagawat Singh by saying he had only the best interests

of both countries at heart.

During the 1983 communal violence in the island, he had prevented Tamil Nadu holding a hartal in support of the Sri Lankan Tamils because he 'Did not want India's economy hurt'.

Thondaman stuck to his statement that India was wrong in treating Prabhakaran as a common murderer. He says the ultimate decision must rest with the courts. Even in the case of Mahatma Gandhi it was the courts that determined the guilt of the assassin.

However Thondaman's legalistic reasoning hasn't convinced his critics in Sri Lanka. *The Island* newspaper in a stinging cartoon showed Thondaman, his feet firmly planted in South India, waving a banner which says 'Prabhakaran is great. don't call him a murderer'.

The cartoon sums up the general impression, specially among some sections of the Sinhalese, that Thondaman is an apologist for Prabhakaran.

Thondaman was certainly used by former President Ranasinghe Premadasa as a political bridge with the LTTE, since he claimed he had friends on both sides of the racial divide.

But Premadasa's successor, President Dingiri Banda Wijetunga would have none of it. He was told firmly by Wijetunga that he would have no special privileges, and Thondaman's efforts to mediate between the government and the LTTE was shot down by Wijetunga.

Thondaman's relations with his new cabinet colleagues have not been entirely cordial either. The presence of his arch rival Chandrasekaran of the Upcountry People's Front in the cabinet has forced Thondaman to strike political postures.

The latest controversy, specially the parliamentary rumpus in India is being gleefully reported by his detractors. They hope that Thondaman's frequent journeys to India will dwindle given the threat of black demonstrations against him.

One of his critics went as far as to say that Thondaman has no business to behave as a citizen of India too. 'We don't have dual citizenship with India neither will we tolerate dual loyalties'. Thondaman's statement coming just a week before the anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, resulted in severe protests in the Indian parliament.

Censorship Threat

Veiled threats at censoring the Sri Lankan press have been surfacing in the past few weeks. A threat given credence by President Chandrika Kumaratunga when she told the media recently that the government would have no alternative but to clamp down restrictions, unless the press acted responsibly.

Acting responsibly has different connotations for different people. For the Peoples Alliance government it seems to mean a self-censorship in reporting the island's 12-year-old ethnic conflict. Today, when everybody not only in the urban centres but in the villages as well, are tuned in to foreign radio networks, specially the BBC, censorship has little meaning.

Sometimes foreign reporting gets distorted and truth becomes a casualty. Wouldn't it be better then to have the local media report what is happening on its own doorstep?

In her tirade against the media, the press in particular, the President castigated, by inference, *The Sunday Times* group of newspapers owned by Ranjith Wijewardene, an uncle of Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe and the Island group of newspapers managed by her uncle Dr. Sivali Ratwatte, as the villains of the piece.

Both newspaper groups were no favourites of former President Ranasinghe Premadasa either. At different times they came in for harsh censure by Premadasa. So neither of them can be suspected of a hidden agenda to destabilise the People's Alliance government.

Every government has its hurrah boys, and the Kumaratunga government is no exception having cultivated, when in opposition, its own coterie of supportive mediemen.

But it cannot take for granted independent professionals who will no matter which side takes the top slot, goes about its business of informing its readers.

Surprised at the President's collision course with the press is Dr. Sarath Amunugama, a former Director of Information and an internationally known communications scholar.

'Frankly I did not expect her to respond in this way. She is a sophisticated lady who has experience of how the media works in a liberal democratic environment. She was trained as a journalist in *Le Monde*

which is reckoned as an independent newspaper' says Amunugama.

But the President's war with the press has surprised other intellectuals as well. Surprised because it was the media that brought her from the political wilderness to the highest seat in the land. It was the charismatic Chandrika Kumaratunga that the media idolised, seeing in her the new messiah that would free them from '17 years of corruption and the abuse of power'.

What then went wrong with her and the media. As one political analyst puts it, she surrounded herself with the 'wrong people' who began to physically and mentally distance her from the media. The excellent rapport she had with the media quickly evaporated and she began to see a deliberately destructive media, except the government

controlled press, all set to destabilise her government.

Of course it cannot be denied that a section of the press minutely scrutinised her private life, even going to the extent of saying where she dined and with whom she dined and on what she dined, sometimes directed at embarrassing her. What President Kumaratunga should have done is to ignore, not react.

The intense debate as to how the media should handle the 'war' has generated different viewpoints. But the majority believe that the country must be told, not military strategy, but the long-term political strategies to end the conflict.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga needs the support of the media to help her through the difficult months ahead when the northeast conflict escalates. It is now time to call a truce.

Economic Plan Derailed

The fresh outbreak of war between government forces and the Tamil Tigers and the prospect of an escalation in defence spending have derailed the Sri Lankan government's plans to revive the island's economy, according to analysts in Colombo.

Before the fighting broke out on 19 April, the prospects looked encouraging. A truce was in effect, economic activity was slowly returning to the war-torn north and east and foreign and local investor confidence was rising.

The government hoped that the large budget deficit, the main challenge facing the economy, would be cut to 7.5 percent of the GDP this year from 10 percent in 1994. 'We will make every effort to generate savings in government expenditure by eliminating wasteful spending and tightening fiscal accountability', President Kumaratunga told Sri Lanka's donors at Paris in April. But as the fighting had already resumed, she cautioned. 'But security related expenditure will turn out to be unpredictable'.

Donors, especially the World Bank, have already expressed concern about the budget deficit and spending on welfare programmes and subsidies for the poor. The deficit was 49.5 billion rupees last year, 45 percent higher than the previous year.

The situation is now back to square

one. The budget was based on the premise of peace and reduced defence expenditure. Now the equation will change with additional expenditure for

military requirements. The island spends about \$500 million, or 15 percent of its annual budget, on defence related expenditure.

The Tigers have destroyed two navy gunboats and shot down two transport aircraft, using surface-to-air missiles for the first time, depleting Sri Lanka's already tiny air and naval fleets. If the war is to be prosecuted, not only is there a need to replace lost equipment, but also to buy more and especially weapons to counter the anti-aircraft missiles', a defence analyst in Colombo lamented.

The government could anticipate looking at a deficit of nine percent of GDP. There would be huge increases in defence spending and no prospect of revenue increasing this year. To raise money, the government would probably issue more Treasury Bills, rather than print notes and inflame already high inflation. But this would mean interest rates going up and then people moving away from equities. The stock market's all share index has fallen almost 20 percent since the truce was broken. The prime lending rate at present is 17.7 percent. Increased interest rates would in turn discourage entrepreneurs who already have to pay dearly to borrow money for their ventures, a Colombo economist noted.

NEWS REVIEW

The Press versus The Government

A war of words has broken out between the Upali Newspaper Group owned by Seevali Ratwatte, and the defence ministry of which the State Minister is Anurudha Ratwatte. Incidentally, both the Ratwattes are brothers of the country's Prime Minister Mrs. S. Bandaranaike and maternal uncles of President Mrs. Kumaratunga. Seevali Ratwatte would appear to have lost all love for his brother and his niece.

It all began when the Sinhalese-language *Divaina* and the English-language *The Island*, both owned by Upali Newspapers, recently published stories that food supplies to armed forces in military camps located in northern Sri Lanka had been disrupted and stocks were running low.

Divaina said the military had been 'trapped' and surrounded by the LTTE at the massive Palaly air base in the north. It said the Air Force had cancelled regular supply flights of fresh fruit, vegetables and meat to Palaly after the Tigers shot down two Air Force planes there.

The defence ministry accused the newspapers of the Upali Group of distorting facts and putting out alarmist reports to undermine the military's war effort. The stories prompted the defence ministry to divulge for the first time what food the camps had and how long stocks would last. It said fresh vegetables were not getting through that they were being grown in the camp grounds.

'There is generally no tradition anywhere in the world of divulging the food stocks available at an army camp', the ministry said in a statement on 11 May. 'But in order to show how shamefully wrong the misleading story in today's *Divaina* is, we shall depart from that tradition and disclose the amount of dry rations available'. It listed the camps and how long food stocks would last.

Sri Lankan newspapers enforced strict self-censorship under the former United National Party government whose 17-year reign was ended in August by the People's Alliance of President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga. Journalists criticising the government or publishing unpalatable reports were often harassed, beaten and sometimes even killed. The government sometimes withheld newsprint from errant newspapers.

Since Mrs. Kumaratunga took power, promising press freedom the newspapers have given their newly found freedom full rein. Some have developed reputations for distorting, even fabricating, stories to play up the sensational at the expense of the truth, according to some foreign journalists in Colombo. Some newspapers go out of the way to publish stories about the President's private life in minute detail as to where and with whom she spent the evenings, what she wore and ate etc. They display an attitude of total hostility to the President and the government she heads.

Standing by its reports, the Upali newspaper said, 'We conceive it our duty to keep our readers well-informed of developments in the security situation'.

The Island said, 'We do not preach war. We demand, on behalf of the people, that the government should be unequivocal and unambiguous in dealing with the danger that we face. Too often have the authorities drifted into a state of torpor and somnolence. The terrorists are currently on the offensive and have the initiative'.

The Upali Group of newspapers, from the beginning, have been critical of the President's strategy in respect of the peace process and her dealings with the LTTE. The *Divaina* in particular has adopted a pro-Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinist stance giving prominence in its columns to known anti-Tamil writers.

Speaking at the opening of the National Information Centre for journalists, the President lashed out at newspapers on 28 May over the coverage of news and stories about the war and related matters which she described as irresponsible journalism. 'We take the war situation seriously, and the media should play a responsible role. Trying to analyze military secrets is advantageous to the enemy. If the newspapers continue to behave in a manner which is not in the national interest at this time of grave national crisis, the government will have to take note and consider necessary action', said the President. She did not elaborate as to what action that might be, but observers thought she was hinting at censorship when she said, 'We have resisted bringing in any kind of restriction on the media. Please do not compel us to do it'.

Alluding to the fate that befell journalist Richard de Zoysa who, during President Premadasa's regime, was abducted from his home at dead of night by police officers and whose dead body was found the following morning on a beach, the President said 'This

government will not indulge in the killing of journalists and drop their dead bodies from helicopters into the sea. She complained that the newspapers distorted and twisted the news on the war, revealed military secrets or mocked her government for publishing its strategy. Decrying the practice of military commanders revealing secrets to the media, she asked as to which country in the world, when it was at war, revealed its war or peace strategy as demanded by certain sections of the media. Part of the motive for some journalists might be to fan emotions among Sri Lanka's majority Sinhalese, she said.

On The Military Front

The casualties of Eelam War III have been mounting daily to alarming numbers as fighting continued between government forces and the Tamil Tigers into the second month. Even a short respite seems to be out of the question now that the President has ruled out any talks with the Tamil Tigers.

In her televised address on 22 May, President Mrs. Kumaratunga said, 'The LTTE has unilaterally decided to call off the truce and they are against our political solution. Therefore it is not necessary to talk to them about it'. The government would discuss the peace proposals with other parties and seek a solution with or without the LTTE, she added.

The LTTE also has threatened 'disastrous consequences' if its conditions were not met and if the government adopted a military option. LTTE's official English fortnightly *Insight Report* carried in its latest issue an editorial titled 'Doors for Peace are Still Open', urging the government to lift all the bans, restrictions, sanctions and blockades imposed on the north.

'If the day-to-day problems are resolved to the satisfaction of the LTTE and the Tamil people, the LTTE would negotiate with the government a political solution to the ethnic problem'. 'But if the government abandons the policy of peace and peaceful resolution of the conflict and adopts a military option it will have disastrous consequences for the entire country', the editorial said.

The indications now are that the war will be bloodier than before and long drawn. The government has placed the country on a war footing with a supplementary budget to be presented in parliament soon. The allocation for defense in 1994 which stood at 540 million US dollars was drastically cut by government in anticipation of a negotiated peace. Now

the government has found it necessary to restore the cut and believes it may need even a larger allocation.

The government is not seeking to conceal the fact that it is seeking to obtain aircraft, tanks, gunboats, anti-missile systems and an assortment of weapons from other countries. Ministers have confirmed that they have received positive responses. New Delhi has confirmed that its Navy is already patrolling its southern coastal waters to prevent any 'smuggling activities'.

As the fighting escalates, the United States confirmed that it was considering a Sri Lankan request for material support. The US Assistant Secretary of State, Robin Rafael said that equipment such as barges that could help re-supply military bases might be sent. US policy forbids the supply of lethal war material to Sri Lanka.

The body count during the first four weeks since fighting resumed following the LTTE's withdrawal from the truce on 19 April exceeded 400, according to figures released by the government and military sources. The military said on 16 May that 181 LTTE men had been killed and about 250 injured since April 19. A Defence Ministry statement said the figure had been confirmed by rebel radio transmissions monitored by the military. It said the largest number, 61, had been killed in the eastern Trincomalee district where clashes had been the most frequent and fierce.

While the military has not released the exact number of its casualties, by the beginning of the second week of June, it is estimated that as many as around 250 security forces personnel have been killed, including about 100 who were killed when the Tigers shot down two air force planes last month. According to informed sources, the Tigers have suffered an equal number of casualties and the civilian casualties were put at approximately 95.

Military reports claimed that at least 60 LTTE cadres were killed in a massive combined operation launched by troops on 12 May in the jungles near Kokkaddicholai in the eastern district of Batticaloa. Fierce fighting erupted when troops sought to corner LTTE in the jungles. In the ensuing battle nine soldiers were also killed and many injured. The army claimed that two LTTE camps and several bunkers were destroyed in the offensive. On the same day, in a separate encounter, LTTE cadres attacked an army patrol at Namalgama in the Polonnaruwa district, killing four soldiers.

Two hundred Tiger cadres ambushed an army patrol near the

eastern port of Trincomalee on 15 May and shot all 13 soldiers dead. The attack occurred at Kumburpiddy on the northernmost army-controlled road near the small town of Kuchcaveli, about 25 km (16 miles) north of Trincomalee, after the soldiers ambushed and killed an unknown number of Tiger cadres. The army claimed that troops responded with heavy artillery fire into the jungle into which LTTE cadres had fled and that follow-up patrols found pools of blood, believed to be from LTTE casualties, but no bodies. In a separate incident, troops attacked a Tiger hideout in Cheddikulam near the northern town of Vavuniya killing five cadres, the defence ministry said.

In the northern Jaffna peninsula on 16 May, troops fired 'in the direction of an explosion' ahead of their forward defence line, killing two rebels and seriously injuring three, the defence ministry said.

LTTE cadres launched an overnight attack on 16 May on the Elephant Pass military base in the north killing two soldiers. Helicopters evacuated eight wounded soldiers from the Elephant Pass camp braving possible attack by anti-aircraft missiles.

Troops and tanks, backed by artillery moved forward on 18/19 May to expand the perimeter of their northern Palaly air base in the Jaffna peninsula. A military spokesman said that 13 soldiers, including two officers, suffered minor wounds in the operation by two infantry battalions to push out the camp perimeter by at least three kilometres (two miles) so that approaching aircraft would be beyond the range of LTTE's anti-aircraft weapons. Troops met fierce resistance from the Tigers during the first hour of fighting. 'At the start of the operation there was a lot of resistance, there was a lot of mortar fire but then they vacated the area', he said. The army claimed that at least 50 Tigers were killed in the encounter. Jaffna residents said about 15,000 families living in nearby villages were displaced by the operation.

Security forces went on full alert in Colombo on 18 May for possible sea attacks by the Tigers. Navy frogmen were checking ships in the port of Colombo for explosives after intelligence agents reported alleged plans to attack the harbour, according to Colombo reports.

'We have strengthened security and have mounted patrols outside the port based on intelligence reports of possible attacks', a navy official told correspondents. He said the navy was searching the entire port area and officials

containers were searched for explosives.

According to reports from Colombo, the information regarding possible attack in the harbour allegedly came from members of 'Black Tiger' suicide squads arrested in Colombo. Police sources said areas under threat included the central Fort area, Galle Face esplanade, Pettah Bazaar and army and naval headquarters, all within a kilometre (half a mile) of the coast.

The police set up more checkpoints around the city, and hundreds of Tamils have been taken into custody on suspicion. Deputy Defence Minister Anurudha Ratwatte said, 'Meticulous attention has been given to the defence of the city of Colombo', he added, 'All precautions have been taken to reinforce security with a view to preventing untoward incidents of any kind'.

The fear of LTTE attack of vessels in the Colombo harbour resulted in the diversion of arriving small vessels to the southern port of Galle.

The LTTE attacked a military observation post near the Elephant Pass military camp in the north on 19 May killing six soldiers, a senior military officer admitted. He said 14 soldiers were wounded in the attack.

Jaffna residents said 15 civilians were wounded on 21 May when their bus came under shell fire from Palaly. Shelling from naval gunboats and bases located in the north continued in Jaffna allegedly to restrict movements by Tiger cadres. However, according to reports from Jaffna many civilians have been injured or killed as a result of indiscriminate shelling.

At least 27 soldiers were killed on 23 May when LTTE cadres ambushed forty soldiers who were engaged in mine clearing operations along roads and attacked them with rocket-propelled grenades and machine-guns at Vakara in eastern Sri Lanka. The troops returned fire, and according to military spokesman Lt. Col. S. Handapangoda 20 LTTE cadres were killed. On the previous night, Tigers fired gunshots and hurled grenades at two police stations in the Batticaloa district and in the ensuing battle two civilians were killed, and 25 civilians and three policemen were injured, according to officials.

On 24 May Tigers attacked a bus carrying 25 passengers including police commandos at Thalankuda near Batticaloa in the east killing two STF police commandos and three civilian women. Three other commandos

Continued from page 7

travelling in the bus and 12 other passengers were injured.

On 25 May, the Tigers massacred 42 villagers in Kallaru, a fishing hamlet in the eastern Trincomalee district. They also shot dead a leading Buddhist priest and long-time critic of the LTTE, who has been responsible for promoting many Sinhalese settlements bordering Tamil areas.

On 27 May night, army commandos killed 10 Tiger cadres, including two area leaders, during jungle fighting in the northeastern Weli Oya area, a military spokesman said. Five army commandos were wounded in the clash.

Military spokesman Captain Thilak Senanayake claimed that the Tiger cadres were killed in a shootout with troops on 27 May in the jungles at Anadakulam in the northeast and that no soldiers were killed in the clash.

Tigers killed at least 23 soldiers when they attacked and overran an isolated military camp at Tharavikulam in the eastern Batticaloa district on the night of 28 May and the air force sent helicopters and warplanes to protect the surviving soldiers of the 200 strong garrison forced to flee into the nearby jungles. At dawn, several hours after the attack, government helicopter gunships and warplanes bombed the jungles, and artillery shelled the area.

In another attack on the same day, the Tigers destroyed a communications tower in north central Vavuniya early cutting off the district's communications. 'They blew up the tower with time bombs at around 2.30am', a military spokesman said.

Military spokesman claimed on 30 May that the troops had killed 49 Tiger guerrillas in ambushes in the eastern jungles over the previous few days. The cadre dead in one ambush in the Pulmoddai area on 27 May included a Tiger holding the rank of lieutenant colonel and five with the rank of major. A Defence Ministry statement said that troops had killed six Tigers in a search and clear operation near Pooneryn in the north.

42 Civilians and Monk Killed

LTTE cadres killed 42 civilians on the night of 25/26 May in an attack on the fishing village of Kallaru. Reports stated Tiger cadres opened fire on Kallaru located north of Trincomalee in the east, where about 65 Sinhalese and Muslim families lived in huts.

According to survivors, between 200 and 300 members of the LTTE approached Kallaru and first attacked a small local army camp situated in the village. However, the army camp was deserted as the 55 soldiers present had reportedly gone out on operations. One survivor told Amnesty International that the LTTE members then walked into the village and knocked on doors. When people came out they were shot at close range. Among those killed are at least 12 women and six children. The attack lasted all night. At the end of it, LTTE members reportedly ransacked the houses and set them on fire.

Meanwhile, 40 miles to the south of Kallaru, Kithalagama Siri Seelalankara, commonly known as the 'Dibulagala Priest' after his temple, and a known critic of the LTTE and who encouraged Sinhala colonisation in the east, was shot dead with his driver near his temple.

Amnesty International concern that the massacre at Kallaru may mark the beginning of renewed attacks on unarmed civilians has been heightened by another report on 26 May that LTTE members killed a Buddhist priest known for his stand against them.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) condemned the Kallaru killings. 'ICRC delegates saw the bodies of 42 civilians, among them women and young children, massacred during the night by armed combatants', it said in a statement. 'The ICRC strongly condemns any attack on civilian targets and population, which are in contradiction with the most basic rules of human behaviour'.

The European Union on 29 May strongly condemned the killing of 42 civilians by Tamil Tigers and urged the rebels to open peace talks with the Sri Lanka government. A statement issued by France, which holds the rotating EU presidency, said it was the LTTE's first deliberate attack against civilians in three years. The EU 'resolutely condemned' it, as well as the killing of a Buddhist monk the same day. The EU strongly urged the LTTE to open political talks as soon as possible with the Sri Lanka authorities.

This is the first time that the Tigers have attacked civilians in the current fighting, although they had resorted to civilian killings in the past. Some Tamil political analysts in Colombo feel that the Tigers have changed tactics and are targeting civilians in eastern Sri Lanka to divert government troops from the north to protect Sinhalese and Muslims living in the east. And some even assert that the

Tigers want to incite an anti-Tamil violent backlash in south Sri Lanka to attract international sympathy for the 'Tamil cause'.

'The LTTE wants to divert troops to protect the border villages so that they will be spread thin on the ground in the north', said political columnist Dharmaratnam Sivaram. 'When civilians in border areas are attacked, the government will react to the political sensitivity of the issue rather than in terms of a military strategy. The fact that the priest was a specific target shows that the Tigers are going about this with a certain aim in mind', he said.

'The LTTE will attack more soft targets in the east. If the government has to concentrate on protecting the east, then it will be easier for the LTTE to fight the army in the north', said Suresh Premachandran of the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front, a Tamil political party.

Military officers said that the LTTE may be trying to provoke a backlash against the Tamil minority community by the majority Sinhalese. 'Taking the attack on the village and the killing of the priest together, the Tigers may be trying to create another July 1983 situation. Then they can gain world sympathy which is now against them', a senior military officer said.

The Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE) in a statement condemned the LTTE for the massacre of 42 Sinhalese villagers, including women and children. It also decried the killing of the Buddhist monk.

MIRJE also said it had received reports of armed forces burning civilian homes and forcing Tamils to act as walking mine detectors. And it further denounced the reported killing in the east of five Muslim civilians by the army on May 6.

'MIRJE wants to remind both parties to the conflict that international humanitarian law and principles prohibit attacks on civilians and other inhuman and cruel treatment of civilians caught in conflict situations, irrespective of their ethnicity', said the statement.

MIRJE also urged the lifting of the government embargo on essential goods to the north to relieve unnecessary hardships. 'We also appeal to the government to go beyond the LTTE and to place its proposals for a political solution before the people of Sri Lanka', it said, adding the conflict could not be solved by military means.

Extradition Request

Government and non-government circles in Colombo were surprised when India formally asked Sri Lanka on 3 June to arrest and extradite Velupillai Pirabakaran, the leader of the LTTE, and two of his top associates, in connection with the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on 21 May 1991.

The extradition request follows a petition signed by over one hundred Indian MPs demanding the government of Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to make such a request from Colombo. Observers in New Delhi say that the Indian government's move was motivated more by domestic compulsions. Mr. Rao is facing a major crisis in the ruling Indian Congress Party which has been racked by internal factional feuds. In this context, with such a large number of his own party MPs demanding the LTTE leader's extradition, Mr. Rao had no alternative, the observers say.

Cabinet Minister P. Chidambaram told the Indian Parliament that a special messenger had been despatched to Colombo carrying papers to seek the extradition of Pirabakaran and his two associates. The Minister acknowledged the difficulties of the Sri Lankan government to comply with New Delhi's extradition request and of bringing LTTE leader and his associates to trial in India.

The authorities in Sri Lanka informed India's Central Bureau of Investigation earlier this year that the absconding accused were in Jaffna where there was no civil administration and no inquiries could be conducted', he said.

Mr. Chidambaram said that, nevertheless, an Indian special court trying 26 people for Gandhi's murder had granted fresh non-bailable warrants of arrest against the said three accused for their apprehension and extradition to India. The court has declared Prabhakaran and his two associates as absconders.

The Indian High Commission in Colombo and the Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry confirmed that the request had been lodged with Sri Lanka's authorities.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman said the government would process the extradition request in accordance with law, and the Attorney General would take appropriate action. He said the documents submitted by the Indian government would be handed over to the Defence Ministry, which handled issues of extradition. He also said it was too early to comment on the outcome of the request and that if

needed the government may ask for more supportive documentation from the Indian authorities.

Tamil circles in Colombo feel that the extradition request from New Delhi has added further complications to any chance of a negotiated settlement of the ethnic conflict with the Tigers. In any case, they say that the request will have little practical meaning in that the Sri Lankan authorities would never be able to take the LTTE leader into custody as their writ does not run in the areas under the LTTE control, nor will he and his associates allow themselves to be captured alive as they will bite the cyanide capsule (which they carry always) no sooner they face any danger of being captured.

Meanwhile reports indicate that the Indian navy has intensified patrols along the country's southernmost coast in a bid to shut down clandestine supply routes to northern Sri Lanka. The navy has been stopping more than 300 vessels a day in the Palk Strait separating India and Sri Lanka to ensure they are not carrying contraband cargo to Tamil rebels, Indian Vice-Admiral Prem Vir Das was quoted as saying.

Red Cross Vessel Hit by Mine

A cargo vessel belonging to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), carrying 12 people hit a mine near the army controlled port of Kankasanturai in the northern Jaffna peninsula on 3 June. One crewman was missing, presumed dead, and three other members of the all-Indonesian crew were injured, according to a spokesman for the ICRC.

It is generally thought that the mine was laid by the LTTE aimed at vessels belonging to the government going in and out of the KKS port, and the ICRC vessel was never their intended target.

The 38-metre (125-feet) utility vessel, chartered by the Red Cross for the regular run from Point Pedro 200 km (125 miles) down the east coast to Trincomalee, was about to undergo security checks at the port of Kankasanturai when it hit the mine.

There was an explosion as it was about to turn into the port, seriously damaging the front of the hull, Red Cross field coordinator Dominique Henry told newspapers. The vessel, called the Sea Dancer, was carrying 12 people including one Red Cross official and a U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees official, Henry said. The three injured crew members were taken to the nearby Palaly air base for treatment.

'This is the first time one of our ships has hit a mine, as far as I know', Henry said. 'We must seek further security guarantees', he said, adding that he did not know whether or not it was a LTTE mine the vessel hit.

The Red Cross has run regular relief missions to the Tiger-controlled north and back, ferrying the injured, drugs, food and other cargo. According to agency reports Red Cross relief missions are temporarily suspended until security can be assured.

Meanwhile the LTTE is reported to have refused to give Red Cross vessels safe passage to the KKS port, a Red Cross official said on 11 June.

'We're not going to enter the Kankasanturai navy harbour with civilians on board as the LTTE refuses to give us security guarantees when entering or leaving the harbour', Paul Fruh, deputy head of the ICRC delegation in Sri Lanka said.

ICRC vessels taking food and passengers between Jaffna and the north-eastern port of Trincomalee undergo navy checks at Kankasanturai. The LTTE had said that they could no longer guarantee the safety of boats flying the ICRC flag entering or leaving Kankasanturai, Fruh said. The ICRC plans to negotiate with the navy to ensure checks can be done at Trincomalee or outside Kankasanturai, Fruh said.

The ferry service between Jaffna and Trincomalee will be suspended from 12 June as the ICRC had withdrawn its escort, according to a government official. The ferry Ngaroma plies between Jaffna and Trincomalee three times a month and is used by Jaffna residents, especially the sick, as all land routes between the peninsula and the mainland have been cut by fighting.

The Sri Lankan navy was reported to be looking for mines off the northern coast following the fate of the ICRC vessel.

Tamil Shops Burned Down

Fears of a repeat of the July 1983 anti-Tamil violence gripped the population as at least 23 shops and boutiques belonging to Tamils and Muslims were burned down during the night of 2 June in a resurgence of communal violence in Sri Lanka's southern port city of Galle, about 140 kilometres south of Colombo. As the fire swept through the city, even some shops belonging to the Sinhalese were burnt.

In apparent retaliation to the killing

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of 42 Sinhala civilians in the eastern province and a well known 78-year-old Buddhist monk, Kithalagama Siri Seelalankara known as the 'Dimbulagala Priest', who was shot dead near his temple in Polonnaruwa district, and on the evening of the monk's funeral, extremist violent elements went about the city on a rampage setting fire to Tamil owned shops. One police post was also burned down.

Following the arson attack, Tamil residents and shop keepers fled to take refuge in temples and school buildings. A 12-year-old girl died on the night of 4 June when arsonists set fire to at least nine homes of Estate Tamils on a tea estate in Elpitiya in the Galle district.

The government promptly clamped down a curfew and rushed reinforcements to contain the violence from spreading to other areas. Particularly in the capital city of Colombo and its suburbs where an estimated 200,000 Tamils live, security was tightened with thousands of troops from the army and navy being deployed on each and every road.

President Mrs. Kumaratunga in condemning the arson attack on Tamil shops accused 'opposition conspirators' of inciting the violence and of planning to plunge the country into a July 1983 type of communal conflagration. She promised to take strong action against those who planned and participated in the violence.

Academics Disappointed Over Breakdown of Truce

A large number of Sri Lankan academics employed abroad have expressed profound disappointment over the breakdown of the cessation of hostilities between the Government and the LTTE.

They also have unequivocally condemned the 'military calculation' that appears to have guided the LTTE's decision to break the truce.

The full text of their communique is as follows:

'We, the undersigned, are profoundly disappointed by the breakdown of the cessation of hostilities (COH) between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE. We saw the major initiative taken by the Peoples Alliance administration in meeting the voters' mandate and creating an atmosphere in which a lasting peace could be negotiated as an enormously welcome move. We were heartened by the initial response of the LTTE and also, importantly, all sections of the Sri Lankan polity. The

Sri Lankan people made clear their desire for peace.

It is then extremely unfortunate that the LTTE chose to unilaterally break the COH leading in recent days to the loss of hundreds of lives, and the re-imposition of war's inevitable hardships on the people of the North-East.

'We unequivocally condemn the indefensible military calculation that appears to have guided the LTTE's decision to break the COH; we also condemn the unconvincing justification offered by the international apologists for the LTTE in defence of the LTTE's anti-democratic rejection of the people's aspirations for peace.

The LTTE should not once again confuse short-term military gains with the possibility of obtaining a military solution to the ethnic crisis. We urge the LTTE to recognize the urgent need to shift the debate from military strategy to the alternate political programs that can meet the just call of the Tamil people for inter-ethnic justice and democracy. As we have learnt bitterly from the past it is predominantly civilians who would end up as victims in a spiralling cycle of violence.

'Similarly we condemn those political forces in the South who urge retaliation against the LTTE's military attack with full scale war against the Tamil people. There should be recognition of a crucial ethical and political distinction between the LTTE's actions and the just struggles of the Tamil people.

We urge also that the PA do everything possible to ensure that food and medical supplies reach the people of the North; surely, the right to humanitarian aid should not be contingent on the state of military relations between the LTTE and the armed forces.

Notwithstanding the LTTE's decision to resume hostilities, in the last few months the people of the North-East have clearly expressed their desire for peace. In this light we urge the PA to fulfil its electoral mandate for bringing about a just and democratic solution to the ethnic crisis by presenting its proposed political program to the people of Sri Lanka. We hope this will open the door to public debate and discussion among all the three communities to collectively determine the institutional arrangements for peace with democracy. We urge moreover that the LTTE respect the wishes of the Tamil people and participate in the national discussion of a political solution.

The following are among the signatories to the above statement:

Prof. Stanley Tambiah, Harvard

University, Prof. Gananath Obeyesekere, Princeton University, Prof. Valentine Daniel, University of Michigan, Prof. Kumar David, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Prof. C. Manoharan, University of Wisconsin, Parkside, Prof. Rajini Obeyesekere, Princeton University, Prof. Jonathan Walters, Whitman College, Prof. David Scott, University of Chicago, Prof. C.R. De Silva, Indiana State University, Prof. Henry Steiner, Harvard Law School, Oadri Ismail, Columbia University, S. Nanthikesan, Harvard University, Arjun Guneratne, University of Chicago, Kumanan Nesiya, University of Rochester, Sumi Kailasapathy, New School of Social Research, Pradeep Jeganathan, University of Chicago, Janice R. Fine, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Milan Rodrigo, Cornell University, Farzana Haniffa, Mt. Holyoke College, Malathi de Alwis, University of Chicago, Vasuki Nesiya, Harvard Law School, Asha Abeysekera, Mt. Holyoke College, Sonali Perera, Columbia University, Anif Rupasinghe, Texas A & M University, Nalin Jayasena, University of California, Riverside, Ameena Nalim, Texas A & M University.

European Parliament on Arms Sales and Breakdown of Peace Process

The European Parliament in a resolution adopted recently strongly urged the European Union and its member states to tighten controls over the sale of arms and to prevent arms from reaching the LTTE and similar organisations.

The European Parliament also called on the Governments of SAARC nations and nations of the Indian Ocean region to exert pressure on the LTTE to return to the negotiating table.

It urged all member nations to use all political and economic measures to support the Sri Lankan Government's effort to revive the peace process and to improve the application of human rights legislation and called on the Commission to increase the co-operation with the Sri Lankan Government's effort to revive the peace process and to improve the application of human rights legislation and called on the Commission to increase the co-operation with the Sri Lankan Government under the recently conducted agreement and to give all the support needed to bring about peace and reconciliation.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

The European Parliament is deeply concerned at the breakdown of the negotiations between the democratically-elected Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, which were aimed at resolving the long-standing conflict in Sri Lanka.

Whereas the elections of 16 August and 9 November 1994 won by Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga were free, impartial and correct, and whereas her accession to the Presidency was marked by her personal commitment to launch direct negotiations with the LTTE to offer greater devolution of power from the central government and the strengthening of the protection of human rights, and to stress that all the citizens of Sri Lanka should retain their ethnic, religious and linguistic identities.

Deploring the LTTE's unilateral breach of the ceasefire proclaimed by President Kumaratunga on 8 January 1995 and shocked that, in LTTE attacks on Sri Lankan naval vessels in Trincomalee harbour on 19 April, the destruction by missiles of two Air Force transport planes on 28 and 29 April and other attacks on both military and civilian targets, most recently in the district of Amparai and Vavuniya, 300 new victims have been added to the 30,000 who have perished since the armed campaign of the LTTE began in the 1970s.

Recalling that, of the several Tamil militant groups which had earlier conducted an armed struggle for a separate Tamil-speaking state, only the LTTE had refused at that time to give up armed struggle and pursue peace negotiations.

Gravely concerned by the oppression of those Tamils who do not support the LTTE in the LTTE-controlled areas such as the Jaffna Peninsula.

Whereas the Presidency, acting on behalf of the European Union, condemned the LTTE's attacks at Trincomalee and referred to the need for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Sri Lanka in its declaration of 21 April 1995 on Sri Lanka.

Recalling its resolutions on the situation in Sri Lanka, especially that of 22 April 1994,

Condemns the actions of the LTTE in withdrawing from the peace negotiations and unilaterally breaking the ceasefire with unprovoked acts of violence;

Considers that the reasons put forward by the LTTE for breaking off the negotiations with the Government of Sri Lanka demonstrate an underlying reluctance by the LTTE to enter into a constructive dialogue;

Stresses the risk that the interruption of the peace negotiations may lead to a further escalation in the conflict and calls on both sides to be willing to resume negotiations which would allow for a new ceasefire agreement and the resumption of non-military supplies to the Jaffna peninsula;

Stresses to the Sri Lanka Government the need to avoid indiscriminate retaliation against civilians and to be willing to negotiate with the other Tamil organisations which do not support the LTTE;

Calls on the European Union and its Member States to use all political and economic means to support the Sri Lanka government's efforts to revive the peace process and to improve the application of human rights legislation; calls on the Commission to increase its co-operation with the Sri Lankan Government under the recently concluded agreement and to give it all the support needed to bring about peace and reconciliation;

Urges the European Union and its member States to tighten controls over the sale of arms and to prevent arms from reaching the LTTE and similar organizations;

Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Member States, the Government of Sri Lanka and the other members of SAARC, and the LTTE.

Talks With Tamil Parties

The government has been engaged in talks with Tamil political parties, excluding the LTTE, in regard to the devolution of powers to the Tamil areas of the north and east.

Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister, Prof. G.L. Peiris said the government had not slammed the door shut on talking peace with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) but that the LTTE had left if no choice but to leave them out of the current discussions.

'The idea was to send the package first to the LTTE and it wouldn't be discussed officially with anyone else until the LTTE had seen the package and had an opportunity to react', he told reporters in Colombo on 18 May. But the Tigers refused to respond to repeated invitations to set dates to receive and discuss the political package on several occasions and later resumed hostilities.

'The situation has changed fundamentally after the Tigers unilaterally broke the truce and resumed armed hostilities' Peiris said. 'And therefore the government will be discussing the

main elements of the package with the different political parties'.

He said the government had bent over backwards to meet Tiger demands. 'As far as the government is concerned, it's not through choice that it is engaged in hostilities with the LTTE, but through being forced by the necessity of the LTTE resuming hostilities against the government', he said.

Peiris said Sri Lanka had widespread international support for its peace effort. 'The international community has come out in full support to the Sri Lankan government and was convinced that the government was genuine in its efforts to restore peace. They have offered us not mere verbal support but material support', he said. 'Support with regard to the war', he clarified when questioned. The Minister declined to give details as to which countries had offered what, saying these questions were unfair in the present situation. 'These governments will assist us in tangible material ways when we need such support', he said.

Bomb Blast at Airport

Three detonators went off but failed to trigger some 24 kg (53 lb) of explosives on 5 June that wrecked a van outside Sri Lanka's Katunayake International Airport, some 20 miles from the island's capital Colombo.

There were three 'devices', each containing a detonator and about eight kg (17½ lb) of unspecified explosives, according to the police at the Airport who promptly attributed the blast to the LTTE alleging that the design was similar to car bombs used by the Tigers in the past.

'Even if the explosives had been detonated, the van was in an isolated area with the nearest building about 100 yards away, so the damage would have been limited', an officer said. He said two men were seen running away from the van shortly before the explosion but no arrests had been made.

Security at the Airport had been stepped up after intelligence reports that Tigers were planning bomb attacks in the south of the island, particularly in Colombo.

Concern Over Electoral Reforms

Smaller political parties and those representing ethnic minorities in Sri Lanka are concerned that electoral reforms proposed by the government for July this year could reduce their representation in the island's parlia-

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ment, according to some political leaders and analysts.

The ruling People's Alliance has proposed a mixture of proportional representation and the British-style constituency-based first-past-the-post system to replace the currently operating version of proportional representation. The parliamentary committee was trying to see how to balance proportional representation and a first-past-the-post system.

A parliamentary select committee reviewing the constitution is presently discussing electoral reforms. Some are of the view that the reforms should ensure more accurate representation for minorities and small parties. They consider inadequate or lack of parliamentary representation as the main cause of the two insurgencies, the ongoing armed rebellion by Tamils demanding autonomy in the north and east, which has been raging since 1983, and the left wing youth-based uprising by the JVP in the south of the island brutally crushed in 1990.

'Small parties have some concerns about the proportional representation system being changed. They don't want any party to get a steamroller majority. They want to ensure parliament reflects the ethnic proportions in the country. A purely electorate-based system of representation or even one mixed with proportional representation reduced the chances of minority parties being adequately represented in parliament', said a political analyst.

Under the draft proposals, the number of MPs would be increased to 245 from 225, of which 77 would be nominated by parties based on the proportion of votes received in each district by each party. The 168 elected members would be voted in on a first-past-the-post basis from 160 polling divisions, a few of which being designated as multi-member constituencies.

Athauda Seneviratne, a Deputy Minister from the LSSP in the ruling alliance, said he preferred the electoral system in Germany under which 50 percent of parliament is chosen on an electorate basis and the rest on national proportional representation. 'It is more democratic as small parties and ethnic minorities can collect support from all over the country to elect members to parliament. Even if they lose in their own electorate they can be elected to parliament through national proportional representation', he said.

Australia Ready to Help

Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans said his country was ready to offer what help it could to solve Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis.

But Evans, who helped broker a peace settlement for Cambodia, said he did not think there was any 'real scope' for third party mediation between the government and the LTTE. 'If both sides think it would be helpful to have some third party involvement then we would stand ready to offer such assistance as we can, either directly or perhaps through the Commonwealth', Evans told a press conference on 22 May in Colombo.

'But the situation at the moment is one that cries out for a solution internally and I don't think at the moment there is any obvious role that I or Australia or anyone else could play', said the Foreign Minister.

Evans, here on a one-day visit, had talks with Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar and Justice Minister G.L. Peiris. In 1990, Australia offered to play a 'good offices' role for the Commonwealth in peace settlement talks and has renewed the offer to successive Sri Lankan governments.

'I indicated today that whatever we said in the past still holds', Evans said. Stating that Australia was one of the first countries to condemn the LTTE for its suicide bomb attack on two naval vessels last month that broke a truce with the government that had lasted since the beginning of the year, Evans added, 'Australia shares the disappointment of the international community that the peace process was brought to such an abrupt and untimely end by the LTTE action last month'.

He said the Sri Lankan government of President Mrs. Kumaratunga was determined to demonstrate 'that no one can act with impunity in attacking patrol boats and shooting aeroplanes out of the sky'.

He added: 'Without going into detail, my conclusion was that the government response will be measured and will be of a kind that is calculated to keep doors to peace open rather than slamming them shut'.

Scandal Hits Sri Lanka Red Cross

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society has been forced to abandon welfare projects amid allegations of mismanagement and widespread fraud.

Lack of proper monitoring and reporting of programmes, mismanagement of funds, inadequate auditing and serious allegations of fraud has prompted the government to set up a panel to re-organise the SLRC with the help of the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC).

Accusations and counter-

accusations of fraud have appeared in the Sri Lankan press. 'A kind of hysteria has built up where people are talking to one another through the newspapers', said Eric Jensen, head of the Colombo delegation of the IFRC.

The IFRC runs some 160 national Red Cross Societies across the world. The IFRC is distinct from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which works in conflict zones.

Jensen said funds had disappeared allocated for Sri Lankan projects, though he could not say how much. He said a project to build latrines for the poor in South and Central Sri Lanka had only been 50 percent successful because of 'massive mismanagement'.

The IFRC has suspended two local programmes - an island wide disaster preparedness scheme and a primary health care programme. The IFRC, which has a budget of one million Swiss francs (\$840,300) a year, is now concentrating its efforts recruiting several hundred people to the local Sri Lankan Red Cross branches to avoid manipulation by a corrupt few, Jensen said.

TULF Urges Federal Political Package

Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) Leader, M. Sivasithamparam has urged President Kumaratunga to put forward the political package for a federal state. When he led a delegation for formal talks recently TULF took up the question of ensuring that innocent Tamils are not harassed during security operations. The meeting took place on May 30.

TULF Vice President, V. Ananda Sangari said that his party had kept away from the talks, President Kumaratunga held recently with five Tamil parties, so that it could maintain their distinct identity as a non-militant Tamil political party.

The TULF pushed for a merged North-East where they would be willing to excise Ampara District, he said.

The delegation led by TULF President Sivasithamparam included Secretary-General, R. Sampanthan, Vice President, V. Ananda Sangari, Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, MPs Joseph Pararajasingham, A. Thangathurai, K. Thurairajasingham, P. Selvaraja and former MP Mavai Senathirajah.

They will request President Kumaratunga to take action in implementing the following:

- No one should be arrested and detained unless there is reasonable information to justify the arrest.

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- In the event of a person adducing satisfactory proof of his or her residence through national identity, electoral register, registration in the area of residence police station, such persons should not be arrested.
- Families or other persons chosen by the persons arrested or detained, should always be informed within a reasonable time of the arrest, the place of detention, and of any transfer and the identity of the law enforcement officer concerned.
- Arresting officers should always establish their identity, vehicle used by the security forces should have number plates displayed at all times and be clearly identifiable as police or military vehicles.
- Every person arrested or detained should be told the reasons for the arrest, identity of the arresting and detaining officer and where they are detained and the reasons which justify their continued detention.
- All persons arrested must only be held in authorized publicly listed places of detention with free access given to Human Rights Task Force and the ICRC.
- All detainees should be informed of their rights to be interrogated and to give a statement in their own language. Every police station and place of detention should have a sufficient number of persons conversant in the Tamil language to make this a reality.
- Young girls and women should be taken to the police station only in the company of a person of their choice.
- To prevent unjustified arrests people already released after routine checks should be issued with release certificates indicating the date of arrest, who interrogated the person, where he or she was held and the date of release, people with release certificates should not be arrested, without their specific information justifying their arrest.
- Landlords and tenants subletting the premises should be specifically instructed to inform the police station of all the names of persons occupying the house, including new arrivals within 24 hours.
- Registration forms must be made available immediately on request, perfected forms must be accepted immediately when it is handed over at the police station. Very often the police return the form with instructions to come the next day and see the officer who is dealing with the

subject. A designated officer must be available throughout the 24 hours of the day at the police station, to issue and receive registration forms.

- The Army, Navy and Air Force should also comply with the requirement in law that any persons they arrest or detain should be handed over to the nearest police station within 24 hours and in areas where there is no police station within a distance of 20 miles or more, within at least 3 days of the arrest.
- Access must be given to relatives at least 4 days a week whether in prison or any other place of detention.

Diplomatic Relations With Israel?

According to reports from informed sources close to Foreign Ministry in Colombo, the Sri Lankan government has been taking steps of late with a view to establishing diplomatic relations with Israel.

Local political analysts believe that this will make it possible to intensify military-technical cooperation between the two countries and ensure the delivery of Israeli armaments to the Sri Lankan army for the conduct of combat operations against the Tamil Tigers.

The rupture in the early 1970s of diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and Israel was sought to be restored by former President Junius Jayawardene in the mid-1980s with the opening of an Israeli Interest Section in the US Embassy in Colombo. However, when Ranasinghe Premadasa succeeded Jayawardene as President in 1989, he ordered the closure of the Interest Section primarily in an attempt to please Arab nations on which he was relying for aid and trade.

Now that relations between PLO and some other Arab countries on the one hand and Israel on the other have improved, Colombo may feel that the situation is relatively conducive to restore diplomatic relations with Israel.

Government Increases Defence Spending

The government has announced measures to raise funds for the war effort in the north. The measures include raising the defence levy by 1 percent, expediting privatization, a 10 percent cutback on non-priority rupee funded capital investment projects, postponing new projects and transferring 300 million US dollars of accumulated profits from the electricity board to the Treasury, Deputy Minister of Finance,

Prof. G.L. Peiris told Parliament on 8 June.

He said the increase of the defence levy from the present 3.5 percent to 4.5 percent would result in an increase in prices.

Government officials and heads of state institutions will contribute their one day's pay to the defence fund for the war effort in the northeast, according to a cabinet decision which also made it compulsory for cabinet ministers, state ministers and deputy ministers and secretaries to ministries, heads of corporations and other state institutions to contribute one day's pay to the defence fund.

Commencing this month, the compulsory contributions will continue for a period of four months, Deputy Finance Minister said adding that all the members of the parliament will follow suit, a great many of whom have indicated that they will be contributing a far more substantial sum.

The government's measures will increase the defence budget from the current 3.5 billion rupees (about 700 million US dollars) announced in January this year when the peace talks with the Tigers were going on, to 4.5 billion rupees (about 900 million US dollars).

Air Force Seeks Volunteer Pilots

The Air Force is so desperately short of pilots in the Tamil rebel-held north that it is calling for volunteers to train, according to its Commander. Colombo newspapers reported that Air Marshal Oliver Ranasinghe had asked for volunteers from non-flying units to fly aircraft after a large number of regular pilots allegedly refused to fly to northern bases for fear of missile attacks. The Air Force, which lost two transport planes to 'Tigers' anti-aircraft missiles last month in a new tactical dimension in the conflict, was short by about 50 pilots and was planning to acquire more aircraft soon. Ranasinghe told newspapers. But he denied that his pilots had refused to fly, saying flights to the north were only temporarily suspended immediately after the missile attacks but had now resumed after pilots devised and practised new tactics to evade the threat.

'Until they knew what the threat actually was pilots were a little bit cautious... until the uncertainty was over', Ranasinghe told the press. 'Now they're flying again and we have picked up casualties and sent fresh rations (to northern camps). We have resumed flights although they are now irregular. We're not taking troops up and down as much as earlier'.

The Suicidal Game of War and Peace Must End

by Dr. S. Narapalasingam

From Thimpu to Jaffna via Colombo (Hilton)

The first failed attempt (though both sides probably knew it was not serious) to talk peace was when President Jayewardene was in charge. The talks took place in Thimpu in July and August 1985 under the auspices of the Indian government. No further attempts were made until he was succeeded by President Premadasa. When the peace talks in Colombo that lasted for a record 13 months period in 1989 and 1990 under his leadership failed, people had to wait until President Kumaratunga was elected to lead the country for the recently failed peace talks to begin.

It is relevant to note that the Colombo (Hilton) talks between Premadasa and the LTTE lasted for the longest period so far, because there were other pressing issues such as, the role of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in the North-East and expediting its withdrawal from the country; the conscription of youth for training by the IPKF and the building of the Civilian Volunteer Force; and the dissolution of the North-East Provincial Council headed by a rival Tamil group.

The latest rounds of peace talks initiated by President Chandrika Kumaratunga after the August 1994 general elections, began last October. Four rounds of talks were held in Jaffna, a territory under the control of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The LTTE unilaterally withdrew from the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and it resumed attacks on the same day April 19, 1995 by sinking two navy vessels in Trincomalee. The peace talks were automatically suspended.

Mrs. Kumaratunga contested both the General and the Presidential elections in 1994 having declared her commitment openly to a peaceful settlement of the ethnic conflict and obtained a clear mandate from the people to fulfil this commitment. She obtained an unprecedented support in the Presidential elections with 62% of the total votes in her favour. No other leader had the courage to seek such a mandate on the ethnic issue. All the communities supported her in the elections and believed that she would bring peace and prosperity to them. The euphoria was visible even in those

Tamil areas under the control of the LTTE.

The LTTE in turn welcomed her resounding victory in the two elections and expressed their willingness to enter into negotiations without preconditions. President Kumaratunga's sincerity to solve the Tamil problem peacefully by negotiating directly with the LTTE has never been in doubt within and outside Sri Lanka. Her firm belief in the peace option to resolve the conflict received universal acclamation from several foreign governments and international organizations. Unfortunately there were shortcomings in implementing her idea in earnest on the ground.

Perceived stand of LTTE

LTTE took up the stand right from the beginning that the alleviation of the sufferings of the Tamil people resulting from the imposition of the economic embargo by the previous Government following the resumption of hostilities between its security forces and the LTTE in June 1990 must be addressed first. The rehabilitation and development of the area and reconstruction of the infrastructure destroyed by the war as well as the restoration of basic services in the affected Tamil areas must come about as a joint venture between the Government and the LTTE. Under no circumstances it was willing any others including the Government to usurp the authority it was wielding in the areas under its control.

Second cardinal factor which the LTTE was unwilling to concede was its military capability, which it had throughout claimed enabled it to 'defeat' the fourth largest army in the world. Even any semblance of underestimating this capability would compel the LTTE to prove that this is real and not an illusion. Linked to this perception of power was the expectation of the LTTE that it must be taken very seriously even by heads of governments in any negotiations for the settlement of the ethnic conflict or matters concerning the administration of the Tamil region.

Finally, LTTE had not liberated or rather brought under its control a good part of the North-East region and the dominance of other entities in these areas was an impediment if not an

irritant to achieving its ultimate goal. In this situation, there was the inherent fear of the nature of its future role in the entire North-East region once a political solution acceptable to the Tamil people became difficult to reject. In this regard, the relevance of the claim that the LTTE is the sole voice of the Tamil people gains importance.

The significance of this stand was probably not fully grasped by the present government during the period it had talks with the LTTE in Jaffna. Some of the reasons for the LTTE to have broken the truce so abruptly may in part be attributed to this miscalculation.

Government Actions and Inaction

Neither President Chandrika Kumaratunga nor the LTTE leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran participated directly in the peace talks. Her nominees to the talks were government bureaucrats, senior military personnel and eminent persons - Anglican Bishop Kenneth Fernando, Charles Abeyasekara and Dr. Jayadeva Uyangoda whose *bona fides* were unshakeable. They functioned virtually as her messengers in the absence of senior cabinet ministers with authority to respond immediately to the demands and suggestions submitted by the LTTE delegation. This has been a serious drawback, particularly in the context of LTTE's impatience in obtaining its demands.

LTTE's complaint that President Kumaratunga sent 'personal emissaries who had neither political authority nor government status' for four rounds of talks with them in Jaffna has validity. Perhaps unwittingly, President Kumaratunga's gesture by holding the talks in the LTTE territory became an impediment for such direct and high level meetings. However, the two leaders have exchanged letters concerning the peace talks, which were later made public.

The fact that she was fresh and hence underestimated the intricacies in conflict resolution would be a plausible excuse but unfortunately this was a costly mistake. Any complex task to be accomplished successfully requires adequate planning and well thought out action programme with definite time frames for the completion of the relevant tasks. The cost of failure in taking a gamble was so great in this case, that this alone should have compelled her to work out beforehand the foolproof modalities of conducting the peace talks. This preliminary but vital

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work was crucial all the more given the tragic failure of three previous attempts. In this regard, it is apt to cite from the editorial in the March 1995 issue of *TT*.

'The prudence and efficacy of the methodology hitherto adopted in the negotiating process between the government and the LTTE is questionable. Whatever merit the principle of transparency may have, protracted intractable problems between parties with entrenched positions cannot be resolved by discussions surrounded by the glare of publicity'.

Before the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) came to the negotiating table several behind-the-scene talks took place in Norway. The British Government had unofficial discussions with members of Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, before declaring a ceasefire. The secret contacts were being vigorously denied by the British government until close to reaching an agreement.

The absence of an outside mediator or mediators acceptable to both sides was another serious drawback, given the mistrust and past experiences of unkept promises and broken pledges of previous governments. With the direct involvement of neutral third party mediators, it would be difficult for either side to pull out of the peace talks unilaterally on some flimsy grounds.

President Kumaratunga has for a long time been saying that her government has an extensive devolution package to satisfy the aspirations of the Tamils. By not revealing this she failed to demonstrate her assertion that her government is different from all governments of the past in respect of its attitude to the Tamil problem. There was no way for the Tamils in the North-East and indeed others to judge her claim of heading an honest, impartial and benevolent government that is sympathetic to the legitimate rights of the Tamils. By this act of omission, she allowed space for the LTTE leader to pronounce that 'there is no fundamental difference between the present Government and the UNP regime'.

This accusation will become more credible if she continues the entire economic embargo reimposed in the wake of the resumption of hostilities on April 19. President Kumaratunga is reported to have told the other Tamil parties represented in Parliament that she cannot put forward her long-awaited peace package now, because of fears of unrest among the Sinhalese following the recent attacks

carried out by the LTTE. This statement too tends to corroborate the above charge, as previous governments also used the same argument to deny the due rights to the Tamils. For whatever reason, withholding the package will not help to confirm her credibility. She should not fall to the temptation of committing the same blunders her predecessors did with dire consequences that affected the ordinary peace loving people in all parts of Sri Lanka.

In describing the LTTE leader as a 'merciless megalomaniac' and the late President Premadasa as 'another man who needed psychiatric treatment pretty seriously', President Chandrika has done harm to her standing as a great national leader, Sri Lanka never had before. She may have to negotiate with the LTTE leader at some point, and name-calling is not going to make this easy.

Implications to the LTTE and Tamil community

The condemnation by the international community (reference can be made to the *TT* of May 1995), as well as by the liberal Sinhalese leaders, intellectuals and academics with a known record of sympathy to the Tamil cause, of the recent actions of the LTTE cannot gladden millions of Tamils in and outside Sri Lanka. LTTE's military successes are undoubtedly attributed to some daring acts of its suicide squads - the Black and Sea Tigers. Japan tried to win the second world war using the kamikazes. No doubt the suicidal crashes of their pilots on enemy targets had a devastating effect on the morale of the allies who were fighting them but these did not in the end bring victory to the Japanese. Fidel Castro was brave to stand up against the might of the USA and her allies. The few backers (for their own selfish reasons) who provided economic and military assistance to Cuba had long vanished. The Cubans are now paying a hefty price and many are so hopeless that they are willing to risk their lives in order to flee from their own home soil.

The reasons provided by the LTTE to have pulled out of the peace talks and resume the attack on military targets on April 19, 1995 only hours after announcing its withdrawal from the cessation of hostilities pact raise many questions.

The insistence of the LTTE that it would not discuss political issues, until their demands were met can be seen as its determination to flex its muscle in order to exhibit its strength to the people. Alternatively, it can be viewed as testing the sincerity and serious-

ness of President Kumaratunga's Government in solving the ethnic problem as promised steadfastly by her before and after the August 1994 elections. A third possible reason as can be discerned from the nature of some demands of the LTTE could be to provide a safety valve to pull out from the peace talks at a convenient time.

The four demands were: (i) The lifting of the economic embargo imposed by the previous government in 1990, which admittedly was an extreme inhumane step taken, which inflicted severe hardships to the people in the North; (ii) The removal of the restrictions on fishing in northern waters; (iii) The removal of the Pooneryn army camp; and (iv) Allowing the free movement of armed LTTE cadres in the East. As a result of the fourth round of talks held on 10/11 April 1995, the embargo on all items including fuel was lifted two days later (except for the 8 listed items which could be used in attacking the military targets). Restrictions on fishing with three exceptions were also lifted. The restriction on fishing in the seas from Devil's Point to Thalaimannar were to be reviewed in 3 months time. Although the government had already moved unilaterally the Pooneryn camp 600 metres away from the Pooneryn-Sangupiddy route and given an undertaking to place no checks on the road and to allow unobstructed use of the road by civilians, this was inadequate to satisfy the LTTE which insisted on the complete removal of the camp. With regard to the free movement of LTTE cadres in the Eastern Province while being armed, the government indicated its willingness to negotiate this matter along with others within the context of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and proposed the days between 6th and 10th of May for the next round of talks centering on all residual matters including the negotiation of an annex to this agreement. Government also admitted that earlier decisions on lifting the embargo had not been fully implemented and that it would take steps to remove some obstacles (which were not identified in the statements) so as to ensure the free flow of items removed from the embargo.

LTTE also would not agree to the functioning of Monitoring Committees headed by foreign personnel from Canada, the Netherlands and Norway until the cessation of hostilities was converted into a permanent ceasefire. The government agreed to discuss this matter too in the next round of talks. Refusal to discuss political issues before their demands were met within the deadline set by the LTTE, regard-

less of their reasonableness, as against the accommodating stand of President Kumaratunga on the various demands of the LTTE coupled with her principled position on the ethnic issue has enhanced her stature in the eyes of the international community as a sincere national leader.

The consequences of LTTE's hasty withdrawal from the peace talks and starting Eelam War III with increased ferocity on the presumption that President Kumaratunga's government was not sincere and truthful with regard to the pledges given to solve the ethnic conflict peacefully are actually catastrophic to the interests of the LTTE let alone to the aspirations of the Tamil community. Some of them are similar to shooting own goals in the game of soccer. These are indicated below:

- Pushing the government which was committed to a peaceful settlement of the ethnic conflict towards the military option.
- The swiftness of the attack in Trincomalee sinking two navy vessels followed by the downing of two aircraft in Palaly and other subsequent attacks, lend credibility to the accusation that LTTE also had a hidden agenda ever since peace talks began in Jaffna. The reasonableness of LTTE's demand which the government stated had military implications and which the LTTE vehemently asked during the peace talks appears to have lost credibility. The credibility of the LTTE has also been impaired.
- Forcing the government to seek military assistance from the same sources like its predecessors and strengthening the military.
- Among several condemnations of the LTTE for unilaterally breaking the truce and restarting the war, is the resolution of the European Parliament adopted on May 18. Even liberal Sinhalese politicians and peace activists who had been soft to the LTTE appear to share this condemnation. The resolution of the European Parliament clearly brands the LTTE as the villain.
- International opinion which had been very sympathetic to the plight of the Sri Lankan Tamils since the 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom, has almost disappeared now. On the contrary, President Kumaratunga's Government has won considerable sympathy from foreign governments and international organizations after the April 19th incidents, including the way the truce was broken after only 14 weeks.
- The Congress government of India, an arch adversary of the LTTE

had been brought closer to the Sri Lankan government. The issue of extradition of the leader of the LTTE which was dormant all this time had also been activated.

- In decision-making process, the military establishment's views will carry greater weight than before and will insist that its interests are not relegated. This was one of the accusations levelled against the government by the LTTE, claiming that the military interests took precedence over its concern to solve the Tamil problem.
- The civilian population in Jaffna as before will continue to suffer as a result of offensive actions of the military. LTTE was keen that their sufferings must be alleviated first before any substantive matters are discussed in the peace talks.
- Providing the excuse for President Kumaratunga not to reveal the devolution package as she had throughout maintained that it must first be discussed with the LTTE. An impasse was created by insisting its demands must first be fully met before political issues are discussed.
- Pre-conditions for the LTTE to resume talks with the government can be placed such as decommissioning of weapons etc., which were not imposed before.

Heightened distrust and insincerity are not conducive to resolve conflicts. Killing of civilians deliberately will only intensify hatred between the two communities, who regardless of the outcome of the war must continue to live side by side in the same island.

If one examines closely the past events that led to various stages culminating in the current worsened position in the ethnic conflict, it will be clear that invariably either side has pushed the other to beef up its shooting power.

Peaceful settlement of conflict through negotiations requires goodwill, trust and understanding of others' positions and difficulties. It is not a one-sided effort. Here both sides have failed miserably. LTTE had wanted the Government to prove that its intention to achieve peace was genuine. It probably assumed that there was no need for it to show its sincerity to the same goal.

Returning to the Negotiating Table

If the premise that all Sinhalese governments are basically alike when they come to solving the Tamil problem is accepted, then there is no point in trying to negotiate for an amicable

solution except perhaps for some extraneous reason. The alternative is then to continue the war with all the attendant consequences. In the post-cold war era, many liberation movements, after very long bitter guerrilla warfare and incurring huge losses had to come ultimately to the negotiating table to settle the conflicts with the relevant governments. Without recourse to this *modus operandi*, international recognition vital for economic viability and commercial and other dealings with the outside world will be difficult for a liberation movement that succeeds in liberating some part of a sovereign state by force **without the backing of foreign governments**, despite the moral justification for this course of action. Liberation movements cannot afford to ignore international opinion and it is suicidal to antagonize even friendly governments and leaders. This is the stark reality.

The European Union and many governments have already urged both sides in Sri Lanka to negotiate. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like the National Peace Council and Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality in Sri Lanka as well as other interested organizations outside Sri Lanka are also currently trying their best to get the peace process back on track. Although hostilities have resumed, either party claims that it is not against a peaceful settlement of the conflict. In the light of these developments, a glimmer of hope exists at least for both parties to agree to start talking peace again. As pointed out earlier the task of making peace has been made difficult by the recent events emanating from the Jaffna talks. The clock has been turned back and the peace process has to start from scratch. The cycle of alternating war and peace must be stopped to prevent self-destruction. There are no winners in this insane game and all are losers. If the reports of Sinhalese suicide squads being formed are taken seriously, then the entire country is descending the slippery slope to barbarity. The confidence of the people on both sides has been undermined by the continuation of this seemingly unending cycle of war and peace and war again.

President Kumaratunga should show courage and magnanimity and confirm her assertion that she is different from her predecessors by agreeing to talk with the LTTE. The responsibility to convince again the disillusioned people the wisdom of pur-

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The Question of Extradition and the LTTE's Options

— by Taraki —

It was November 1986 — a time when most of the armed Sri Lankan Tamil groups based in South India were still treated like Delhi's darlings — I happened to meet in Tiruchi a veteran of the Dravidian movement who had dropped out of the DMK when that party started toning down its militant separatist ideology in the mid sixties. After hearing me out on the ground situation in the northeast where the LTTE had emerged as the most powerful group fighting the army, he said:

'The Tigers will have to wage the final war for Thamillelam not with the Sri Lankan government but with India'.

After almost eight years the battle lines have been drawn quite clearly.

India's request to extradite the Tiger leader, once formally accepted by the government, will foreclose a negotiated settlement to the ethnic conflict as long as the LTTE, led by Velupillai Prabhakaran, remains the predominant military and political factor in the northeast.

Apart from this, the request for extradition will not mean much to the government as long as it does not, in some way, lead to substantial military assistance from Delhi to create the conditions for getting anywhere near the leader of the Liberation Tigers.

With Delhi and Colombo closed for good, Prabhakaran has only three immediate and 'tangible' options to help him progress towards his goal and to deter India from making a direct military intervention in the conflict.

The first of course is the Tamil nationalist sentiment in Tamil Nadu, the second is what one may call the strategic opening created by the fundamental geopolitical contradictions of the South Asian region and the third, which I think would be the last resort option, is the potential of the minor but strategically placed anti-systemic forces in peninsular India.

In examining these three options which the LTTE may feel compelled to exploit, in view of the current developments in Indo-Lanka affairs, it must be pointed at the outset that, while the battle lines have been drawn clearly with Delhi's formal request for Prabhakaran's extradition, the first task before the Tiger leader is not simply a question of preparing for a final showdown with India but deter-

ence — that is to raise the threshold of the potential security risk for India arising from a military intervention in the north. The question of deterrence through exploiting these three factors may become more important for the LTTE at this juncture in view of its military designs in the north. It is quite clear that the government feels somewhat confident today that it can, with sufficient wherewithal, handle the LTTE militarily and, according to some reports, seems to be even preparing for an offensive into the Peninsula. So, long as the government continues to feel thus, despite occasional setbacks, the LTTE will have sufficient reason to rest assured that Indian intervention is a very remote possibility.

But the LTTE knows that if it succeeds in achieving its immediate military objective in the north, the government's confidence would be shattered overnight which in turn might compel it to seek urgent and direct military assistance from India. The immediate military objective of the LTTE in the north is already defined by the subtle siege it has laid on the main bases there by threatening and restricting their supplies by sea and air. Either the LTTE has to overwhelm a base in the north swiftly, leaving no time for the government to formally seek Indian assistance to save the place or it has to be certain of adequate time for accomplishing its task by ensuring that there would be sufficient reasons for India to avoid or at least delay intervention in that particular context.

The reason why I think that the LTTE feels compelled to consider the Indian factor in achieving its immediate military objective in the northern theatre is this: if it cannot swiftly overrun a targeted base, it has, unlike on previous attempts, the solid option of cutting off all sea access to that camp and occupying a few captured positions which would enable its anti-aircraft units to effectively prevent the airforce from landing; and then build up psychological pressure towards a surrender. The government faced with this situation which no doubt will politically be explosive in the south, might strongly feel impelled to seek India's military intervention.

This in my opinion may be more worrisome to the LTTE than the ex-

tradition request *per se*. The request and Colombo's eagerness to comply with it do not pose the immediate problem for the Tigers. It is the conjuncture which constitutes the problem — the extradition coming at this juncture when the LTTE seems confident (rightly or wrongly) that it can score a major victory in the north through its siege strategy. While I was in Jaffna the Tigers appeared to be quite confident that India would never attempt a direct military intervention. Though they did not give the exact reason for it, they were extremely sure of it.

In a recent interview with *The Times of India* Indian Foreign Minister Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, asked whether he was ruling out another Indian military intervention in the Sri Lankan conflict said: 'Yes. But I would not put it so positively. The question does not arise since there is no request' (from Sri Lanka). Therefore, the LTTE's confidence that the Indian government will not intervene in their war is plausible only insofar as there is no unqualified and urgent request from the Sri Lankan government for military succour. Their confidence at that time, I think, was derived from an assessment of India's internal politics — of an increasingly weak central government and also from their military power which had been geared since the beginning of Eelam War Two to make, if the need were to arise, an Indian military undertaking in the north vastly expensive and ultimately futile.

But the picture has changed after the extradition request. Today the LTTE's ability to rapidly transform an Indian military intervention into an unmanageably embarrassing quagmire depends, in view of a possible Sri Lankan request, on the degree to which it can successfully exploit the factors which in their view may constitute a deterrent against Delhi. In this context the question firstly is whether Delhi would be deterred by Tamil Nadu politics in directly helping the Sri Lankan government fight the LTTE?

As every student of Sri Lankan Tamil politics knows Tamil Nadu has played a key role in deciding some aspects of Delhi's policy towards Colombo. The Indian Central Government has taken steps from time to time to secure the allegiance of the people of that state. Tamil Nadu has a long militant secessionist tradition. This is something which Delhi is still unwilling to ignore.

Hence the various measures taken by the Indian central government, including the creation of the state on

the linguistic criterion, have to be seen in this perspective – that is as pacification measures. Therefore, while Delhi's assistance to the armed Tamil groups was mainly aimed at bringing pressure on the Sri Lankan state, it was also meant to show the people of Tamil Nadu that the central government was on their side – helping their brethren across the Palk Straits.

But while its army was fighting the LTTE in the jungles of the northeast India discovered that the sense of 'Tamilness' was stronger among considerable sections of its citizens in the state of Tamil Nadu than their sense of 'Indianness'.

The Tigers enjoyed the active patronage of all the Dravidian parties in the state while they were killing Indian soldiers in Sri Lanka's northeast. Karunanidhi who was the chief minister at that time was flagrantly on their side. He refused to welcome the Indian army returning from Sri Lanka, accusing it of killing Tamils. Jeyalalitha who was staking her claim for the ADMK at that time said that Thamilnelam should be established like Bangladesh if the Sri Lankan government went too far.

The PMK emerged as a third force in the Tamil Nadu political scene with a clear secessionist – pro-LTTE ideology. A number of secessionist groups that had been formed by former Naxalites began campaigning publicly for launching a struggle to establish a separate sovereign state of Tamil Nadu. They even held a conference in Tanjore convened mainly by P. Nedumaran in 1990.

Then there was the massive 'Tamils' right to self determination' conference and rally in Madras which was organised by the PMK.

The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi and the subsequent discovery of LTTE's involvement in it gave the

Indian Central Government a good opportunity to crack down on all this severely. Jeyalalitha who had formed an anti-DMK alliance with the Congress turned anti-LTTE. It appeared for a while that everything was under control except of course the emergence of Gopalasamy as a strong pro-LTTE politician.

After he formed the MDMK and contested a few by elections it appeared that he too had been reined in to some extent. But the LTTE was patiently at work strengthening its logistical base in the state and maintaining contacts with all the Dravidian parties at the grassroots and middle levels mostly.

The scene has changed very much today. Jeyalalitha is at loggerheads with the central government, the leader of the Dravida Kalaham Veeramani and P. Nadumaran, both steadfast friends of the LTTE leader, have won the chief minister's confidence and are close to her. The leader of the MDMK, Gopalasamy has begun to emphasise his pro-LTTE stand again. Pictures of him cradling a Tiger cub in his hands have appeared in many parts of the Tamil Nadu state. And none of the Dravidian parties thought it necessary to even mildly criticise Thondaman for his veiled justification of Rajiv's assassination. The shooting down of the two Avros has resulted in a groundswell of support for the LTTE among those who are aligned to the Dravidian parties at the grass roots level. The leaders are not unaware of this.

The strongly worded statements against Colombo's military action in the north by P.M.K. and M.D.M.K. have to be seen in this context.

The most important development in this direction however was a resolution passed at a recent D.M.K. conference, calling on the Indian Central Government not to militarily inter-

vene in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict.

The significance of the D.M.K.'s stand lies in the fact that the Congress Party in Tamil Nadu is attempting to nurture an election alliance with it (the D.M.K.). The grievously and badly splintered Tamil Nadu Congress Party depends on an alliance with the D.M.K. for its survival in the state.

However the crises in the Congress Party are such that Narasimha Rao might feel compelled to overlook the Tamil Nadu factor in taking a clear stand against the LTTE if an emergency were to arise in Sri Lanka.

And that may make an Indian military intervention on Colombo's request not as simple as going to Gayoom's rescue in the Maldives in 1988. For Prabhakaran that is enough. The extradition then would mean little to him.

(Courtesy of *Sunday Island*, 11.6.95).

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suing the peace option and create conditions for mutual trust can only be ignored by warmongers.

Some useful suggestions have been put forward by the National Peace Council, which should be supported by all sensible Sri Lankans as well as others interested in seeing lasting peace in the island. Their proposals listed below deserve serious consideration:

(1) Declare a four week truce during which time a comprehensive ceasefire agreement can be drawn up and monitoring teams with international participation can be put into operation.

(2) Agree on a framework for negotiations in which both sides put forward basic principles concerning an

overall settlement.

(3) Ensure that there is parity of status in the negotiating teams in which the negotiators have political legitimacy, credibility and the required professional competency. Some form of international facilitation may be advisable in this regard.

Some friendly governments, Australia and Canada in particular have offered to provide experienced mediators to facilitate the negotiation process. Given the past experience of three failed peace talks, this is an imperative, among other prerequisites indicated in this paper, if renewed peace efforts are to succeed. The suicidal game of war and peace must end sooner than later.

On Understanding Self-Determination – Part I

by P. Imayavarampan

The national question has in one way or another become a major political issue and cause of conflict in more than a few countries of the Third World. The satisfactory resolution of this question is important not only to political stability and economic development but also to issues of democratic and human rights in the Third World. Sri Lankans, for certain, need not look too far for evidence.

The nature of the national question has changed considerably since the days of colonial rule, although the class nature of nationalism remains unchanged in substance and nationalism still preserves its two faces, one progressive and liberating and the other reactionary, narrow and oppressive. The progressive mode of nationalism which linked hands with the politics of egalitarianism to unite the people under colonial oppression in their struggle for liberation has gradually given way to chauvinism and national oppression. This transformation was not sudden, and the Third World, especially within the non-aligned movement, played an important part in opposing super-power and imperialist domination of the world. The inability of the ruling classes in the Third World countries to stand up to imperialism led to the weakening of the national leadership in most of these countries and to the effective collapse of the non-aligned movement as a body to defend Third World interests.

The failure of the leadership of most of the Third World countries in safeguarding political and economic independence was not surprising, since it represented the native exploiting classes and did not want to transform their social system. Some regimes were reformist only to the extent that reforms helped to keep off revolution. (In subsequent years, some of those reforms were reversed by right-wing governments with the blessings of the guardians of democracy and human rights in the west). Political independence in the colonies increased the social and political awareness of the masses. This meant that the poorer sections of the population wanted a fair share of the wealth and the working class posed a challenge. The ruling classes found it expedient to use contradictions among the people to divide them, a lesson that they learnt from the most successful

colonial masters. Race, religion, language, caste, tribe and every conceivable difference was exploited in politics, electorally and otherwise. This was effective in deflecting the attention of the masses from the more pressing problems, at least for a short time, but harmed the economy, undermined political stability and made the ruling classes increasingly dependent on the imperialists for their survival.

Poverty and indebtedness have got worse in the Third World and imperialism through its agencies, including the World Bank and the IMF, is able to dictate economic and social policy to the poorer countries. It is able to destabilise any government that fails to toe the line, create conflict and cause civil war. Overall, in many ways the situation is worse for the people of the Third World than it was under colonialism. Under colonialism the people had a clear view of the enemy. With neo-colonialism the enemy is invisible. The ruling elite classes are incapable of showing the way out of the mess, and for their own survival are betraying the interests of their countries and the people.

It takes a lot of courage and foresight to face the reality of the national crisis in the Third World countries and seek just and lasting solutions. The exploiting classes have time and again shown their reluctance if not inability to solve the national problem, unite the people and lead the country out of the political and economic mess. Governments that represent the exploiting classes have sought to benefit from national oppression and from dividing the people in every possible way except those that threaten the existence of the social system that preserves the interests of the upper classes. Thus, valid solutions can come only from the forces of progress and social justice. They recognize the need for uniting the oppressed masses nationally and internationally to overcome imperialist domination.

It is in this context that it will be useful to discuss the concepts of nationhood and self-determination. There is a tendency among some, unfortunately including a number of 'leftists', to cling too strongly to definitions. I do not deny the importance and value of definitions in understanding matters. Definitions are more valuable

in an explanatory sense than in a restrictive sense. A definition of a nation helps us get some idea of what a nation could be not but always as sufficient to legislate whether a particular group of people can constitute a nation. The definition can help one develop guidelines in dealing with a political problem but when applied rigidly and dogmatically can only have disastrous consequences.

Nations do not wait for definitions to validate their existence. While common factors such as race, language, tribe and culture can bring a people together as a nation, a nation remains, above all, a product of history. Thus we have nations that cut across racial, linguistic, cultural and tribal barriers, and we also have situations where major common features have failed to bring together different nations as one.

When dealing with the question of the right of a nation to secede, we come across the question of feasibility and more often that concerning the right of a people to nationhood. The ability of a nation to survive is a more important issue than the award of the licence to nationhood by some definition. Size is important both territorially and demographically, but not critical. What is most important in the making of a nation is the ability of the socio-political system to unite a people and give them a sense of belonging. Cuba has united people black and white more successfully than any other country, and the mighty U.S.A., despite its economic and military muscle is more divided than ever, despite its reputation as the great melting pot. What united India and gave Indians the feeling of 'Indian nationalism' at one time has ceased to be, and India is today a jumble of nations and a prison house for some nations and nationalities. The rigid approach of Nehru towards the demands of the Sikhs for a state of their own, using the argument that states cannot be formed on the basis of religious identity not only hardened attitudes but also strengthened Sikh nationalism and militancy. What is threatening the unity of India are the concentration of power at the centre, the growth of Hindi-Hindu chauvinism and the continuing domination of the upper castes.

Nations emerge as a consequence of socio-political awareness and often as a result of oppression. This is particularly true of the emergence of Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka. The Tamil nation in Sri Lanka is not in any way a successor to the Jaffna Kingdom of four centuries ago, nor is it composed of the Tamil speaking people living in the island. What transformed the

awareness of a Tamil identity into nationalism was a sequence of events since pre-independence days. It took more than the Citizenship Act, the Official Language Act of 1956, the continuous planned colonisation of the north and the east, the notorious standardization of 1971 and anti-Tamil violence on more than one occasion. The vote for the TULF in 1977 was as small an endorsement of the demand for a separate state as was the vote for the Federal Party in 1956 an endorsement of the demand for a federal state. It was the deception since 1977 combined with the violation of the right of the Tamil people to survive even on the soil that constituted their traditional homeland that pushed the Tamil nationality into the current struggle for national liberation.

Efforts to deny the Tamil people their identity as a nation and hence their right to self-determination come mainly from Sinhala chauvinists who argue that Sri Lanka can have only one national identity, namely Sinhala (preferably Sinhala-Buddhist). The denial of the existence of a Tamil homeland in the north and the east of the country is historical mischief and negative arguments about the feasibility of the Tamil nation-state often fringe on dishonesty. Whether a separate Tamil state is a desirable thing is an issue different from the feasibility of one. There are many who believe that a united Sri Lanka is in the best interests of the Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims. But this unity cannot be imposed on the minority nationalities, especially in the wake of the events of the past few decades. Preservation of the integrity of Sri Lanka as a united country is conditional upon dispelling

the fears of the minority nationalities about the prospects of their being treated as equals by the majority. The Tamil people of the north and east of Sri Lanka have asserted their nationhood and to deny this is to reject reality. A united Sri Lanka can only be a union of nations and a stable union needs to be voluntary and hence incorporate the right to secession. Self-determination does precisely this.

Self-determination means the right to secede but not necessarily the act of secession. It can be compared with the right to divorce, which does not mean that every marriage should be dissolved. Without the right to divorce, marriage is like a prison and the denial of that right does not guarantee the survival of marriage in reality. The right to part company makes the relationship more equal and stable than one without that right. The right to secession makes the members of a union of nations feel more secure and enables them to explore the best possible way in which they could coexist within the union as equal partners.

Strangely, some Tamil nationalists who have little to do with the struggle of the Tamil people against a government that has waged war upon the Tamils in the north and east think that self-determination has only one meaning, namely secession. They even accuse the LTTE of betrayal when it is willing to negotiate a settlement within the framework of a united Sri Lanka. This is as mischievous as the position taken by the Sinhala chauvinists.

It is the duty of the progressives among the Sinhalese to explain the

full implications of self-determination to the Sinhala masses so that they are not misled by the chauvinists. The people have the right to know that self-determination means more than the right to secession. It should be explained to them that it also means, very importantly, the right of the nationalities concerned to seek solutions to the national question within the framework of a united Sri Lanka. Whether the answer is a federal state, regional autonomy or self government of another form within a unitary state is a matter for discussion and decision. It may also be useful to emphasise that the stability of the solution will be strengthened by the maximum possible devolution of power so as to strengthen democracy.

If the progressives fail to explain the meaning of self-determination as a matter of free choice by the nationalities and as the only way of achieving a lasting, stable and just solution to the national question, they will only be helping to destroy the prospects of a united Sri Lanka. This will be even worse than the mistake of the parliamentary left in the years between 1956 and 1977, when these learned men and women kept quiet while Sinhala nationalists in the UNP and the SLFP chose to interpret the demand for a federal state as one for a separate state. The opportunism of the parliamentary left benefitted the SLFP and more significantly the UNP. If the left has not learnt the lessons of the seventeen years of UNP rule since 1977, they are doomed to relive the past much sooner than they would ever like to.

(Continued in next issue).

TAMILS LIVING IN THE WEST

A Vanishing Culture and Living in Slavery

It will be more correct to say that the Tamils residing abroad live like slaves than to say that they live in luxury', said Rev. Fr. S.J. Emmanuel, Vicar-General of the Catholic Church of Jaffna. He added that the Tamils earn money at the expense of their life only to spend it to save their vanity in making claims for a higher social status. The interview with Rev. Fr. Emmanuel on the condition of the Tamils living in Europe, following his return to Jaffna after a tour of a few European countries is given below.

Q: You have returned recently after a visit to some European countries. Which countries did you visit and why?

A: I undertook a three-month tour of Canada, France, Switzerland, Britain and Germany. I travelled at the invitation of Mission, a Catholic religious organization in Germany. They had asked me to address the Christians in Germany on the problem in our country in the German language. There were two Indians and seven Africans with me. Some were university profes-

sors and the others were members of the clergy. I visited the other countries mainly to meet our Tamil people living there and to learn about their conditions.

Q: Do the Tamil people there practice our culture?

A: They cannot practise our culture there in the way that they could have done here at home. Some organizations and youth do, however, organize various festivals. They are scattered all over. It is not easy to live together. Consequently, it is difficult to adhere to our culture. In Toronto in Canada alone many thousands of Tamils are living. They are preserving their Tamil culture to some degree. They have been there for less than ten years or so and comprise the old, the middle aged and the youth. The young go to schools. There special Tamil classes

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are conducted. The parents conduct wedding ceremonies, birthday parties and other functions in conformity with Tamil culture. The older people meet in the evenings to discuss various matters. These activities are possible only in the summer and they withdraw during winter. Such activities are there to some extent in Britain and France. But the people in Switzerland and Germany are too scattered to be able to be involved.

Q: *In what kind of circumstances do they live?*

A: They are living like a backward group of serfs among a variety of communities. Language is a major problem for them. They suffer from the false notion that speaking in English will elevate their social status. Therefore they are keen to teach languages other than Tamil to their children. They think that it is below their dignity to speak Tamil. Even when they cannot understand the western language, they seek to speak in those languages to their children, because they fear that their children may learn Tamil. This mentality should change. I would explicitly recommend to them that they should speak to their children in Tamil at least in their homes.

Q: *Is there discrimination in education?*

A: I am not aware of any. I have come across many youth receiving education in countries like Norway, there is emphasis on their education. But those who go to most of the other countries are keen to make money and shy away from education.

Q: *Can you compare them with Tamils who live here?*

A: Tamil youth here share a common social background and by fully subscribing to it live within a good disciplined structure. Those who live there seem to think that freedom means getting out of the grips of their parents and act like the proverbial starved bull that went straight for the dried stick. In the absence of any control, they take advantage of the freedoms they have in their countries of residence to take the path of evil. They seem to have gone completely alien to our social structure.

Q: *Do they enjoy equality in all fields?*

A: Our people live on foreign soil as mercenaries for work and wages. The society there considers them necessary, because, for the sake of money, they are ready to do all the third rate jobs that others will not like to do.

While some of the people of these countries clamour for their (Tamils)

expulsion, a section openly says that they cannot survive without them (Tamils) since the native population is unwilling to do the jobs that they (Tamils) do.

Q: *What type of job opportunities are available there?*

A: However well-educated a Tamil may be, the best job available to a Tamil appears to be that of a vehicle-driver. They get second and third rate menial jobs. Under no conditions are the foreign countries willing to give them high positions. Aliens are treated like aliens. For the sake of money our people use their physical labour to do jobs that could be done by machinery. As a result, they become susceptible to illnesses and a shortened life span.

Q: *What are their employment prospects?*

A: Some Western countries have got together and decided to have a single passport etc. in common and to advance economically.

As a result, they give priority and make concessions to their own nationals without work. The adoption of such policies diminishes employment opportunities for those who go from the Third World. It is as a result of this that they are forced to accept more difficult jobs, whether they like it or not.

Q: *Have those who live abroad achieved their goals for going there?*

A: To make money has been their basic aim. While they earn as much as they expected, they save little. By conforming to the standard of living of the people of the country where they live, they forget their own standards and the purpose for which they went abroad, and seek to lead a life of pomp. Although they have cars, television sets and other commodities, they live in debt. They have to work day and night to save meagre sums. They invest their savings in chit bonds (cheeta) to accumulate the small sums of money they send home. Parents here who do not understand this expect larger sums from their children. The money is often accumulated by saving the refugee allowances and maternity benefits. Some lose large sums of money in gambling horses and other indiscretions. There are only a few who earn without being trapped in this fashion. The fact that money is thus saved at the expense of their lives is hardly appreciated by people here.

Q: *What is the current attitude of those living abroad?*

A: Many are tired of this mechanical existence. They would like to return if the situation in the country changes for the better. It will be no good if they come empty-handed. They need to

come with some capital to invest for their future. Only then can they do some small jobs and earn a living. I have explained this well to them and they realize it. Some have embraced the western way of life and hate to return.

I emphasised to those who expressed a desire to return and wanted to know the situation here that they need to be in the frame of mind that is willing to accept the new leadership and to be controlled by it.

Q: *Why do our young Tamil men in the west not like the young Tamil women who live there?*

A: Tamil women who have lived there for long have absorbed western culture and take advantage of the laws of the country. As a result a large number of women divorce their husbands. Because of this, it seems that, they think that by selecting a bride from here they can keep her entirely under their control.

Q: *What will you like to say in conclusion to Tamils living in the west?*

A: I told them: You who have gone to the west from our country should link eastern culture with western culture and eliminate all aspects that are in conflict with our culture while absorbing all the good aspects. Do not accept everything that is western. When you went abroad, starting with Thaandikkulam, you have continued to live there by tarnishing our struggles by spreading falsehoods. At least in the future, you should make amends for this by clarifying the purpose of our struggle and wipe off the blemishes caused by you. You should also make your contribution to our struggle.

Q: *What is your message to the young men and women who want to leave our soil and go west?*

A: Grass on the other side is greener. The Tamils who live there have lost all their joys. While we here are struggling to live as free men, our people go there and live like serfs as in the days of the old colonial rule and serve the whites like slaves. Of those who went, only a few have attained their goals. If you have the resources, do tour the west. That will be welcome. It is stupid to want to reside there.

(Courtesy: Kalaththil, (Tamil weekly published by the LTTE in London, 24.2.1995).

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THE SUB-CONTINENTAL SCENE

Charar-e-Sharief Burns, Congress Splits and Rao in Crisis

T.N. Gopalan

Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao is not exactly fiddling. But his sheer unflappability in the face of serious crises overtaking the nation as also his own party is both amazing and unnerving.

In a fit of pique, Chief Minister Jayalalitha had compared him, nearly three years ago, to a buffalo – she actually used a Tamil proverb meaning like a buffalo walking on nonchalantly amid a rain of oil. That was in the course of a private conversation with a select group of journalists in New Delhi.

Those who were put off by those remarks, evidently in bad taste, are now beginning to wonder whether using even stronger language to describe Rao would after all be very right.

A shrine dedicated to the memory of a famous Sufi saint, Nooruddin Noorani, second most sacred monument for the Kashmiris after the Hazratbal, has been reduced to ashes in a cross-fire between the security forces and the militants and therewith the dreams of the Rao regime about restoring normalcy at an early date in the strife-torn valley.

In another development, the Congress has split yet again, with Mr. Arjun Singh and his supporters walking out and claiming that their outfit is the 'real' Congress.

But the Rao government is going about as if nothing much has happened raising serious questions on its very *bona fides*. Will the country's interests be safe in Rao's hands? How long could Kashmir be retained as part of the Indian Union? How long the country itself is going to remain in one piece? Such are the questions agitating the minds of the observers here.

The Hazratbal shrine, which is believed to house a strand from the beard of Prophet Mohammed, was patronised by Sheikh Abdullah, the then Chief Minister of Kashmir, and so it became politically significant too. After the dismissal of his government in 1953, his rival, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, turned to the Charar-e-Sharief, near the Line of Control (LOC), for inspiration and made it his political base.

Situated in the Badgam district,

hardly 45 km from Sri Nagar, the Charar shrine attracted devotees from both the Hindu and Muslim faiths. The shrine was an outstanding monument to the best secular traditions of Sufism, an almost syncretic worldview, but essentially deriving from Islam – and a monument also to the glorious traditions of the Kashmiriyat. The Kashmiri struggle for liberation had remained secular till recently.

Back in 1990, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, perceived as an essentially secular force, had given the call for *azadi* (freedom) at Charar and one of the biggest gatherings in the history of Kashmir had been witnessed then.

Though the town's significance faded out since then, it also became the haunt of militants from across the border – they used to slip in and slip out periodically, but they refrained from launching any operation from inside the shrine or the town.

Since the army authorities were successful in flushing out the militants from Hazratbal last year without shedding a drop of blood, apparently they hoped to do an *en core* in the case of Charar too and so laid a siege to the shrine.

The fact remains that in the case of Hazratbal most of the militants who surrendered were released subsequently, but the army was able to expose the misuse of religious places by the militants and express its determination to put an end to such undesirable practices even while generating some goodwill among the Kashmir masses by its tactful handling of the issue. But all that has gone up in flames now.

As early as December last the militants had entered the town and started using the shrine for their confabulations. But only by March this year, the army swung into action, throwing a massive dragnet around Charar. The army perhaps hoped to tire out the 75-odd militants holed up in the shrine. But then there was a significant difference between the those involved in the Hazratbal siege and the Charar variety.

While it was essentially the JKLF militants who had taken refuge in Hazratbal, it was some hard-boiled

characters dancing to the tune of their masters in Pakistan who figured in the Charar episode. The latter were necessarily much more fanatical and fundamentalist than the other group.

The more or less secular JKLF would not have liked to hurt people's feelings by damaging the shrine, whatever its position in the radical Wahabi traditions.

Offering prayers at tombs is anathematic to the Wahabis, and the Charar group, belonging as it did to that militant Islamic tradition, would have no great respect for the shrine itself, and worse, they might even have been planning to get rid of the 'ugly sight' once and for all.

And so even as the army was flaunting its siege operations and warning the militants to surrender straightaway, offering them safe passage back to Pakistan and so on, they were busy fortifying their positions by building bunkers and mining the area with improvised explosive devices and booby-traps rigged with LPC cylinders.

Further since these persons were put up in a bustling town, the army could not succeed in starving them out as it was able to in the case of Hazratbal. Meantime the Charar residents moved out in large numbers, leaving behind an almost empty town.

Finally on May 11, the shrine was all aflame and the fire spread to the near by houses. The fire-tenders could not approach the burning area for several hours because of sniper fire.

In the ensuing melee, many of the militants including Mast Gul, allegedly from Afghanistan, were able to make good their escape.

While circumstantial evidence seems to point to the hand of the militants behind the Charar fire, it is just not conceivable that the army would have dared do such a thing, the people at large seem to believe or at least say so for the record that the shrine should have been destroyed in the cross-fire and blame the Indian government squarely for the tragedy.

Correspondents who toured the valley after the incident almost unanimously say that by its inept handling the army has now totally alienated the Kashmiris and prospects for restoration of normalcy are bleak.

Immediately after the burning down of the shrine, Mr. Rao admitted in a press interview that the incident was indeed a serious set-back, but maintained that the insurgency in the valley had 'died down', but that only 'terrorism lingered on'.

He also vowed to go ahead with the

elections. Observers were aghast. Given the surcharged atmosphere in Kashmir, there were protest marches and arson in many places for several days, there was no way free and fair elections could be held, it was felt. But Rao perhaps hoped to bluster his way through with vague talk of autonomy, little realising the Kashmiris were more alienated from the Indian mainstream than ever in the past.

However wisdom seemed to have dawned upon the government at last – Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan offering himself as a convenient front for the beleaguered government and saying that elections could not be held in the present troubled atmosphere in Kashmir.

Many impartial observers are finding fault with the administration of Gen. K.V. Krishna Rao, and want him removed as Governor of Kashmir and dialogue initiated with the All Party Hurriyat Conference to start with. But Rao is in no hurry to do any of those things, especially when elections are only less than a year away and the communal BJP would be a major rival of the Congress.

And the Congress itself is now riven with serious dissensions.

Former Union Resources Minister and a strongman from Madhya Pradesh, Mr. N.D. Tiwari, a leader from the UP besides the irrepressible Vazhapadi K. Ramamurthy from Tamil Nadu and their associates walked out of the Cong-I, held their own convention at New Delhi, deposed Rao as the President – whose term had any way expired, they maintained – elected Tiwari as the new President and Arjun Singh as the Working President.

It is not clear on what issue they fell out with Rao except that they talk big about secularism and the need for a human face to the economic reforms. They of course do talk of the need for integrity in public life – but nobody takes these rebels on that count seriously – one they themselves have so many skeletons tucked up inside their own respective cupboards and two they would not breathe a word on the scandals which afflicted the Rajiv regime.

In fact they are trying to spread the impression that Rao is deliberately going slow on the extradition of Prabhakaran and on otherwise unearthing the conspiracy behind the assassination, evidently in a bid to win over the Rajiv-loyalists.

To be even more specific, the dissidents have been trying hard to woo Mrs. Sonia Gandhi who has thus far shied away from taking any side in the

intra-party tussle. She reportedly made a half-hearted attempt to avoid the split, phoning up Rao on the eve of the rebel convention, but in vain. She seems to be cut up with Rao as a result, but there are no signs as yet of her taking to active politics.

Whether her doing so now would yield any dividends for her is also a moot point. For the BJP and other opposition parties could go to town on

the revival of the dynastic rule.

Whatever it is an already weakened Congress should stand to suffer even more consequent on the split. But surprisingly, in the latest round of Assembly elections the party could win ten out of 24 seats, though in its traditional pockets.

Only time can say whether the Cong-I can lumber on like this for long.

TAMIL NADU NEWSLETTER

Sasikala Factor Looms Large

by T.N. Gopalan, Madras

She was running a humble video-joint ten years ago and her husband was a lowly official in the Information and Public Relations Department of the State Government.

But today the couple and their clan have struck it rich to mind-boggling levels. At this rate they could put to shame the legendary king Croesus some day, note sardonically their critics.

Politically too they have come to acquire an amazing clout, quite disproportionate to their standing as, nominally at least, non-political, very private persons.

But Chief Minister Jayalalitha's confidante Ms. Sasikala and her husband Mr. Natarajan are casting long shadows on the political scene, but essentially remain very ethereal figures – one could sense their awesome presence anywhere and everywhere, but it would be pretty difficult to come to grips with what they are up to or the real nature of their relationship with Jayalalitha.

While allegedly Natarajan has been exiled from the Poes Garden residence of Jayalalitha, Sasikala herself is firmly ensconced as a trusted confidante of the mercurial Chief Minister who flies into an apoplectic rage if anyone dares cast any aspersion on Sasikala's omissions and commissions.

And so when there were persistent reports to the effect that Sasikala was being interrogated by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with a **havala** (money-laundering) racket, Jayalalitha could not contain herself – she came out with a statement, blistering hot, almost shaking with righteous indignation, hitting out at those who were spreading false propaganda about her confidante Sasikala, who was like a sister to her, (**Udan piravaa sahodhari**, to quote Jayalalitha) and

strongly denying that her confidante had been interrogated.

And even as the people were recovering from the fusillade, trying to figure out as to why a Chief Minister should go out of her way to exonerate a person who was no more than an aide to her, came the news that Sasikala's men had bludgeoned a freedom-fighter's family into selling her a piece of prime real estate at much below the market price.

As it happened that Mahatma Gandhi had once stayed in the bungalow situated on the land in question, the Congress-men took to the streets, protesting the demolition of the bungalow, terming it an outrage.

Though nothing much came of it all, the fact remains with the media, almost totally disenchanted with Jayalalitha, relentlessly carrying story after story on Sasikala's greed and terror tactics, the CM's image took a lot of battering.

The the Enforcement Directorate officially denied that they had interrogated Sasikala, reliable sources in the Directorate asserted that she had been named a suspect in a multi-crore **havala** racket and that the matter was being inquired into.

A Muslim businessman from Ramnad district in southern Tamil Nadu, allegedly the king-pin in the racket – essentially transferring dollars and other foreign currencies to parties here and vice versa in violation of the relevant foreign exchange regulations – is absconding. But one of his accomplices, a prominent jeweller of the city and hailing from Colombo has already been nabbed and he is supposed to have spilled the beans, getting Sasikala into trouble.

But she seems to be carrying on her

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business as usual, her name nowadays linked with all kinds of real estate deals – the Sasikala clan is believed to be virtually gobbling up the State in a frenetic spree.

Poor Natarajan who had initially taken Jayalalitha under his wings when she was a political rookie has been thrown out of the Poes Garden and frustrated in his ambitions to become the Shadow Chief Minister of the state.

Sasikala herself is spending most of her time in the CM's bungalow and is almost the latter's inseparable companion except when she goes to the Assembly. Though Sasikala and her husband are virtually living apart from each other, they are not divorced, but said to be taking care of each other's interests.

It was Rajiv Gandhi who reportedly had warned Jayalalitha against Natarajan's machinations – during the split in the AIADMK after MGR's death, it was Natarajan who was lording the show in the Jayalalitha faction, distributing tickets during the 1989 election, carrying on political negotiation on her behalf, and so on, but was unceremoniously dumped after Rajiv's warning.

Sasikala has evidently been more careful and managed to flourish. Some of Jayalalitha's critics even seek to paint in lurid colours the relationship between the two, but nothing is known for sure.

Swamy Fracas

It was Dr. Subramaniam Swamy who inspired the rumours on the interrogation of Sasikala – incidentally the Madras press virtually eats off the hands of Dr. Swamy who is always generous with unverified, even unverifiable information; inevitably so under a regime so opaque.

And so the State Government is gunning for him like never before. Already the mighty lady is furious with him for seeking to prosecute her on corruption charges.

First the State Government sought to arrest him under the Protection of Civil Rights Act for describing LTTE leader Prabhakaran as an international pariah – to call someone an untouchable is a crime, but only when the person hails himself from a scheduled caste, the government tried nevertheless.

But with the Supreme Court ruling that even if Swamy was arrested, he should be released forthwith on his own bond and general derision the exercise evoked, Jayalalitha chose to give it a quiet burial.

But within days thereafter, her counsellors came up with a gem and now it is Dr. Swamy who seems to be on the run.

Ravi, an accused in a bomb blast case of last year, and wanted under the TADA, surrendered before the Designated Court and made an astonishing 'confession' – he claimed Swamy had harboured him when he was absconding and the former had instigated him to stage a fake assassination attempt against Swamy himself and later throw the blame on Jayalalitha!

Now reports are that Swamy himself could be arraigned under the TADA, even though the Act itself had lapsed – any fresh case arising from an already existing one under the TADA

could be prosecuted under the same Act notwithstanding its expiry seems to be the reading.

Swamy seems to be really scared and has been keeping away from the State for over a month now. Even a photograph produced before the court showing Swamy and Ravi together has been seen to be a fake, but Swamy would like to be doubly sure that no harm comes to him before continuing with his anti-Jaya crusade in Tamil Nadu.

Interestingly the Dravidar Kazhagam – to which Ravi supposedly belonged, but expelled before the explosion – is taking an active interest in the case. Its secretary K. Veeramani is demanding the arrest of Swamy under the TADA.

Major Offensive in Jaffna Problems and Prospects

– by D.P. Sivaram, Colombo –

The government is preparing for a major offensive into LTTE controlled territory on the peninsula. Sections of the military brass who did not positively respond to the government's proposal to launch the proposed assault to capture vital parts of Jaffna including, according to some informed sources, the town and its environs, were promptly transferred out of the key positions held by them. The most important among them is Maj. Gen. A.M.U. Seniveratne who was appointed Overall Operations Commander early this year. The matter was widely reported in the local press. The disaffection caused by the sudden change in the army's field command structure among many senior officers and their men in the battle front was evident in some of the write ups. This was so because there is a general consensus among many in the South who take a keen interest in the affairs of the armed forces that Maj. Gen. A.M.U. Seniveratne is an efficient soldier who had proved his worth in Eelam War Two.

Since the commencement of Eelam War Three the army brass had been working on a long term strategy aimed at consolidating the eastern province first, thereby confining the LTTE to the north where it would, according to them, stagnate and, with systematically applied military pressure, deteriorate in due course.

The government, however, had drawn up a basic plan to deal with the LTTE militarily which little reflected the principles of the strategy adopted

by the army commanders.

The Deputy Minister for Defence appears to have had this plan in mind when he told Parliament early last month that his government had a 'secret plan' to crush the LTTE.

But when the Deputy Minister for Defence put the matter before the army's top field commanders in the north he was told that it was not possible to implement it within the timeframe suggested by the minister and due to the ground realities in the northern theatre of operations. The Minister was not pleased with the reasons outlined by the Overall Operations Commander Maj. Gen. A.M.U. Seniveratne as to why the armed forces were not in a position to capture Jaffna or at least parts thereof. Maj. Gen. A.M.U.'s views were supported by Maj. Gen. Gemunu Kulatunge who was Commander of the Army's Task Force 2 in the north.

Both of them were removed from their posts the next day.

Though this was generally reported in the press, there was no mention of the Jaffna plan or the exact reasons outlined by the O.O.C. and the G.O.C. Task Force 2 in any of the news stories and weekend situation reports. *The Ravaya* (a Sinhala weekly) however, carried a lead story later (2.6.95) that the government was about to launch a major operation into LTTE held areas of the peninsula and that the sudden change in the command structure was

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BOOK REVIEW

Kachchativu and the Problems of Indian Fishermen in the Palk Bay Region

By V. Suryanarayan

Published by T.R. Publications,
Madras 600 017, 1994,
Price Rs. 100, Pages: 74

Review by

Prof. Bertram Bastiampillai,
Dept. of History & Political Science,
University of Colombo.

This attractively got up little book, well published, and furnished with valuable information tables and other useful data, inclusive of references that will be of help to students and interested readers, is really in the nature of an extended critical essay. The main text runs through only 42 pages.

Prof. Suryanarayan examines the problems of Indian fishermen in the Palk Bay arising from their activities in the waters around Kachchativu in a dispassionate manner. He indicates the importance of fishing in the economy of the Indian people inhabiting the areas close to Kachchativu, and the sea around. To these fishermen, prawns which fetch so much money have 'a magnetic pull' that they pay no heed to international boundaries. Likewise, in the quest for their quarry fishermen of several countries poach in areas that they should not drift into as the Sri Lankan fishermen enter the Arabian sea and the Maldivian seas in search of tuna.

However, there is at present tension arising out of 'a conflict of interests'. As the author points out in the interests of 'good neighbourly relations', New Delhi and Colombo have 'concluded the maritime agreements of 1974 and 1976, which ceded Kachchativu to Sri Lanka'. Yet, notwithstanding these agreements, Indian fishermen '... will not easily give up a means of livelihood they have enjoyed for several centuries'. This tenacity becomes understandable when one notes that there is a fair number dependent on fishing for their livelihood in Tamil Nadu. Almost one fifth of the total fishermen population of India are there. Their contribution accounts for 19 per cent of the total marine production of the whole country.

Problems have arisen from these fishermen who enter into waters that have led to 'incidents of harassment and intimidation by the Sri Lankan

Navy ...'. As Suryanarayan fears if this situation is permitted to grow further, Kachchativu which is the bone of contention in the context 'is likely to become a source of tension not only between India and Sri Lanka, but also between Madras and New Delhi'. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has no choice but to espouse the cause of a constituency that is vital to her politically. No wonder then that she disapproves of 'the gifting away... of Kachchativu to Sri Lanka'. J. Jayalalitha exploited the chance when on the 15th of August, 1991, while hoisting the national flag she raised the emotionally popular call in Tamil Nadu 'to take a pledge to retrieve the island ...'. Leaders of the other parties too in the state also have competed with her in demonstrating that they were unhappy that the Centre in India had left Kachchativu to Sri Lanka.

But Professor Shelton Kodikara in his own careful analysis and incisive discussion had argued Sri Lanka's claims to Kachchativu, sometime back in convincing fashion. According to Suryanarayan, however, while now no doubt Kachchativu belongs to Sri Lanka, historically it had belonged to India. In proof of his point of view he cites evidence in pages 9-11, and even further on in his study. Nevertheless, as a judicious scholar he quotes the bases on which the claims of both countries lie to this 'sheer rock with no strategic significance'.

In section VII of the book, Suryanarayan examines the differences in perception on the Kachchativu issue between Madras and New Delhi. To New Delhi, the accent was on 'evolving a policy of friendship and mutual co-operation with her neighbours.' This is reinforced by Mrs. Bandaranaike's view which is presented on page 22. Referring to Indira Gandhi, Mrs. Bandaranaike stated that 'She always displayed ... great statesmanship in resolving whatever problems... we had with India'.

Both the 1974 and 1976 agreements are reasonably discussed from pages 23 to 30. From the beginning, differences of interpretation and understanding between India and Sri Lanka prevailed. In 1974, the agreement did neither create nor confer new rights on fishermen and pilgrims, and Colombo gave an undertaking that fishermen and pilgrims need not take any travel documents to visit Kachchativu. But the problem is whether access to the island also gave to Indian fishermen any fishing rights.

In more recent times, the 'fall out' of the ethnic conflict has compounded the already existing differences between the Tamil Nadu fishermen and the Sri

Lankan Security authorities over the use, especially of the waters off Kachchativu. As a result of sharper vigilance both by India and Sri Lanka over the Palk Bay region because of its use by the militants for illicit purposes, Indian fishermen had fallen victim to the Sri Lankan navy's anti-militant measures. The Tamil Nadu government documents that attacks by the Sri Lankan navy increased between 1983 and 1991.

Consequently, the political fall out has been the spate of complaints from Madras to New Delhi clamouring for 'immediate action to protect the interests of Tamil Nadu fishermen'. In addition, Chief Minister Jayalalitha did not spare Colombo in her recriminations. Sensitive to those incidents affecting the Tamil Nadu fishermen, the Indian government reacted by entering into discussions with Sri Lanka. For instance, when Colombo endeavoured to prohibit the use of boats by resorting to an enactment of an Emergency Regulation in 1993, the Indian High Commission protested, and Sri Lanka amended the regulations. Nevertheless, when official talks took place in 1994, they could not arrive at an agreement to deal with the problem of Kachchativu, the Indian fishermen and the Sri Lankan navy. Sri Lanka has also argued that the LTTE in an endeavour to create a rift between India and Sri Lanka had fired on Indian fishermen. This complicated the question even more.

The writer's final section entitled 'Towards a solution' is rather interesting indeed. He accepts that it is now not possible to revive the question of the right to the ownership of Kachchativu which the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu is still urging on the Centre. Instead, Suryanarayan suggests that India could negotiate with Sri Lanka to obtain Kachchativu and its adjacent seas on 'lease in perpetuity', which will allow the Tamil Nadu fishermen to continue their activities as they had been doing for long. He cites as a precedent that India had leased for use by Bangladeshis in perpetuity Tin Bigha in May 1974 while retaining sovereignty over it. Apparently, Thomas Abraham, a former Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka too seems to favour such an arrangement.

Thomas Abraham regards that India being magnanimous on Kachchativu and hoping that she could buy thereby Sri Lankan friendship as naive. He adds that Sri Lanka relates to India on the basis of 'a whole series of historical fears that are complex'. Moreover, he conjectures that Col-

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ombo might not even have appreciated that 'Delhi deviated from the median line in order to see that Kachchativu fell outside the Indian side'. Abrahams comments that Sri Lanka is 'very firm that Kachchativu was their territory'.

Therefore Suryanarayan concludes that arranging for a lease in perpetuity of Kachchativu and the water lapped by it for use of Indian fishermen is a practical and fair solution. India in turn could reciprocate with certain concessions to Sri Lanka in regard to the outer edge of the continental margin in the South of the Bay of Bengal

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made by the government with a view to facilitate the plan.

The Ravaya story also failed to give the point of view of the commanders who had not responded positively to the government's suggestions of taking the peninsula or parts of it. The President has already indicated to the P.A.'s parliamentary group about the impending operation into Jaffna.

It appears that very little attention has been paid by the government to the concerns expressed by the field commanders in its current preparations to go ahead with the Jaffna operation. The P.A. government needs a major and successful assault into Jaffna to placate the Sinhala Buddhist lobby in the south which has become quite vociferous since Eelam War Three was declared by the LTTE on 19 April. The killing of the Dimbulagala Thero and the manner in which the UNP set about to promote and to exploit what seemed to be a general wave of sympathy and sorrow among Sinhala Buddhists has increased the pressures on the P.A. government to show the south that they are acting quite tough on the Tigers, and the best way to do it, in their view, is to thrust successfully into Jaffna. The following are some of the problems currently faced by the army in battling its way towards Jaffna.

a) During the latter phase of Eelam War Two the army had begun paying great attention to its Counter Insurgency program in the eastern province. This required the army to raise a large number of special troops which were trained in jungle warfare and other types of special operations in the hinterland zones of the east. The army came to soon believe that the counter insurgency program in the east was becoming a great success. Hence to consolidate the gains and to hit what the army believed to be pockets of

which is yet to be finalised. And he is of the view that Tamil Nadu should think along similar lines, and get Delhi to shed its complacency and open a dialogue with Colombo. The author believes that after the recent crack down on the LTTE, the goodwill of Tamil Nadu should now not be suspect in Colombo. In fact, at the launching of Suryanarayan's book in Madras, Thomas Abraham with his abiding interest in Indian-Sri Lankan affairs had apparently suggested that Tamil Nadu should have a Department of Sri Lankan affairs, so that it could make benign inputs into India's Sri Lankan policy.

Suryanarayan writes lucidly and grounds his views on evidence derived

Tiger resistance which had survived in the east, almost all the special forces under the Independent Brigade were trained in counter insurgency ops in the eastern terrain which mostly comprises jungle, shrub and marshland interspersed with impoverished hamlets.

Now, if the army has to move into the peninsula, it will have to do most of its fighting in built up areas which requires special troops that can engage in close combat in such environment. Most of the main sectors of the peninsula are not only full of buildings but are crisscrossed with a maze of lanes and by lanes which can further compound the problem of fighting in a built up area at close quarters. This requires, in the view of the field commanders, a lot of special troops trained in urban warfare which can take the brunt of the fighting when thrusting into Tiger territory in the peninsula. This means that a substantial portion of the army's special forces have to be retrained in urban warfare - particularly of the type they have to wage in the built up areas of the peninsula. The retraining takes time and some experience. Furthermore, the special forces may have some difficulty in reallocating many men to prepare for the battles in Jaffna because they are under a lot of pressure in the east now and they have been losing more men in their ranks due to regular confrontations in the eastern hinterland than the number they have been able to recruit in the latter phase of Eelam War Two. The need for special troops trained in urban warfare is quite pressing at present because the vast majority of the soldiers in the north have not been deployed in any major offensive into the peninsula for a long time, they have been tied down to over extended holding operations since the defeat of Operation Yal Devi in 1993. That was the last attempt made by the

from agreements and discussions between India and Sri Lanka, and other relevant vital data. The style in which the study is written shows the author's flair not only to be serious and analytical but also even to be poetic as the first section vividly illustrates. Though brief, it is a masterly and investigative survey of a problem which has engaged much attention in Indian, especially in Tamil Nadu politics, and should not suffer from neglect or indifference.

This is a useful study not only for those concerned with India-Sri Lanka relations such as Shelton Kodikara and Mervyn de Silva. It is equally important reading for foreign policy makers and advisers.

Sri Lankan armed forces during the UNP regime to thrust out of a military base in the peninsula to secure a specific target in a Tiger controlled sector of the peninsula.

In these circumstances it is felt that these troops, attuned for more than one and a half years to be on the defensive, could become cannon fodder for the LTTE if thrust into the built up areas of Jaffna without well trained special forces securing beachheads and fighting ahead. Nevertheless, it appears that the government is keen to pull out a large number of regular soldiers from the eastern province for the Jaffna offensive. Although many local commanders who had been in the forefront of securing the east during Eelam War Two are not happy with the idea particularly at this juncture when the LTTE is giving the armed forces a bad time in that region, the government seems to be working on the assumption that the temporary set back in the hinterland zones of the east can quickly be rectified once the LTTE's power is crushed substantially in the peninsula; these zones being easy to penetrate and their sources of supply easy to interdict.

b) Casualty evacuation is the second major problem faced by the army at present in undertaking an offensive into the peninsula. None of the bases in the north have adequate facilities to deal with serious injuries sustained by soldiers in battle.

But the LTTE's anti-aircraft potential has made casualty evacuation by air quite a dangerous and precarious task.

The problem before the commanders at the front then is this: if the LTTE were to deploy anti-aircraft units at every decisive point where there is heavy fighting, especially in built up areas, how can casualties be evacuated without jeopardising the limited number of helicopters in the Air Force?

READERS FORUM

RELIGIOUS CONVERSIONS

NOW we are told that all those offensive and ill-founded statements by Hoole in his article in the *Tamil Times* of December 1994 and the numerous footnotes that accompanied it were merely to make the Tamils think. (See footnote 1 of the response of Hoole in *Tamil Times*, May 1995). It is very kind of Ratnajeewan H. Hoole to concede that the Tamils have the capability to think, but unfortunately many people appear to see his motives to be other than to make anybody think. It may be because they don't think, at least, in the way Hoole thinks. What is equally interesting is that the question of conversion to Christianity is seen by him as the only serious objection raised by those who responded to his article (footnotes). The only reason why people referred to that matter was because he was imputing certain motives to the conversion of C.W. Thaamotharampillai in his earlier article.

He has chosen to ignore the more important objections raised in the responses, and 'Tamils who can think' can draw their own conclusions.

Turning to the question of conversion, Hoole has been rather selective in his choice of historical material. His statistics about the Tamil population that converted to Christianity imply that not only the Saiva Vellala of Yaalpaanam became Christian but also the oppressed castes who changed to the 'official religion'. If they reverted back to Saivism when they had the chance, several centuries later, that reveals something about the statistics and the nature of the conversion. The Portuguese could only force the majority to pretend to be Catholics but not really convert them. The point made by him about the possibility that the 'true Hindus' probably moved onto Vanni is idle speculation which will certainly warm the cockles of Sinhala Buddhist Chauvinists who are all out to deny a traditional Tamil homeland outside the peninsula.

The Portuguese did not win converts to Catholicism on the east coast except in urban Thirukkonamalai and Mathakkalappu, and both towns still have a dark-skinned burgher community that has proudly preserved its ethnic identity as a significant part of the urban society. Conversions happened on a larger scale on the west coast. The Sinhalese, in contrast to the claims made by Hoole, also pretended to have changed their faith. The adop-

tion of surnames such as Perera, de Silva, Peiris and even Fernando, which is really a Portuguese forename by the Sinhalese on the west coast was as much for survival as was 'conversion' in the north. The Portuguese did not have much access to the island regions which were under the control of the Kandian Kingdom to different degrees. Conversions were more common among certain caste groups than others for this reason.

Hoole is correct in recognizing that mass conversions all over the world have generally involved a strong element of force. Voluntary conversions on a mass scale have nevertheless occurred in recent times as a political gesture. What is interesting is that, wherever religion has sought refuge in political power, it has ended up as a tool that propped up the oppressors. Even religions like Jainism and Buddhism, which are by far the most humanitarian major religions of the world, could not escape participation in the oppression of the upholders of other faiths. The Saiva-Jain conflict in the Tamil South of India has been analysed objectively by people such as N. Vaanamaamalai and K. Kailaasapathi, who interpreted the events of the time in terms of class conflicts.

Conversion to Christianity under the British happened in circumstances different from those under the Portuguese. Protestant Christianity, the child of capitalism, had by then started to dominate Europe and capitalism itself had taken its initial steps towards monopoly capitalism. The British interestingly, opened the north to American missionaries, whose activities were carefully restricted in the south. The politics of conversion had changed and so had its methods. Inducements other than fear of life were used and paid dividends. Many people living today have had first-hand evidence if not experience of how conversions took place. The 'take-over' of schools (which was more an opt-out than a full-scale take-over) in 1960 was a Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist response to the events of the past. What is particularly interesting is that, while the Muslims and Catholic converts among Tamils chose names of religious significance when they changed their religion, the protestants went for foreign surnames with little religious significance. (I don't think that I need to give examples). Whatever the motives were of these people, they were as much victims of their circumstances as others who acted differently.

The fact that the Federal Party was led to electoral success under the leadership of the Christian S.J.V. Chelva-

nayakam and the fact that a far more capable and popular leader like C. Vanniasingam willingly took second place showed that religion was not the main issue as far as the elite of the Tamil Saivites and Christians of Yaalpaanam was concerned. Caste has, however, been of importance, even to Christians, who had nominally neglected everything that went with Hinduism. It was only in 1977, nearly three decades after the founding of the Federal Party, that the TULF, its successor, fielded its first parliamentary candidate from an oppressed caste, although such castes constituted between 30 and 40% of the population of the peninsula.

As for Hoole's obsession with matters of a sexual nature (see footnote 41 in *T.T.*, May '95 and some others earlier), I do not think that I can be of much help. Such things need to be dealt with at a personal level and by professionally qualified persons.

Before I conclude, I think that a brief note on the question of caste will be appropriate in the context of the comment by Satchi Sri Kantha (*T.T.* May '95) on the review of the book by S.V. Raajathurai (*T.T.* April '95). The caste system was the Indian equivalent of a class system in feudal society. It is inappropriate to a modern capitalist society because it restricts social mobility in a way that hinders social development and imposes an additional burden on a section of the population.

While the feudal class structure in Europe has mostly given way to a new class structure under capitalism, the caste system lingers on in India, despite major social changes. What was objectionable about M.K. Gandhi's approach was his patronizing attitude as opposed to the more egalitarian view of people such as Jawaharlal Nehru.

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Catholic sister seeks educated bride and qualified groom for American citizen businessman brother, 31, and educated sister, 21, in Sri Lanka. Send details, photograph. M 797 c/o Tamil Times.

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Manju Velayuthapillai and Mark James on 3rd June 1995 at Danforth Chapel, University of Kansas, Lawrence, U.S.A.

Dr. Balarajan (Rajan) son of Mr. & Mrs. T. Yogarajah of 18 Inner Fairline Road, Dehiwela, and **Poonkothai (Sumi)** daughter of the late Professor A. Sathasivam and Mrs. T. Sathasivam of 11 Sinsapa Road, Colombo 6 on 8.6.95 at Royal Banquet Hall, Hotel Ranmuttu, Kollupitiya, Colombo 3.

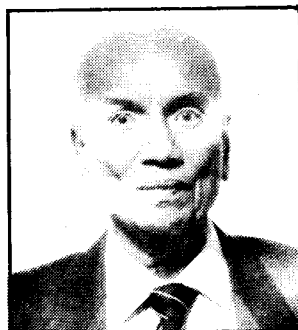
Jeyakara son of the late Mr. N. Nadarajah and Mrs. Nadarajah of 4 South Way, Raynes Park, London SW20 and **Suganthini** daughter of Mr. & Mrs. S. Chel-

liah of Anaicoddai, Sri Lanka on 10th June 1995 at Manor Park Hall, Malden Road, New Malden, Surrey.

OBITUARIES



Vasuki Sivapalan, formerly of the staff of Chundikuli Girls' College, Jaffna; beloved wife of the late Sivapalan (Architect Townscape Design 25.12.94); loving mother of Nardhana; daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Balasubramaniam of Chundikuli; sister of Balaram (Canada); daughter-in-law of Mr. & Mrs. Kathiravelu Kurumpasiddy; sister-in-law of Jeya, Eswaradevi, Vimaladevi, Jeyapalan (Sri Lanka), Skathidevi (Germany) and Gunadevi (Singapore) passed away in Singapore on 21.05.95. - 56 Newdale Place, Brampton L6S 5Z3, Canada. Tel: 905 453 6345.



Sinnapillai Chelliah (79) Attorney-at-Law (formerly of the Point Pedro Bar) passed away on Tuesday, 6th June '95 at Kingston Hospital and was cremated at the NE Surrey Cemetery, Morden on Saturday, 10th June '95. He leaves behind his beloved wife Parvathipillai; only daughter Kalavathy; son-in-law K. Sivakumaran; loving grand-

sons Nimalan, Ramanan, Shyaman (UK); sisters Navamani Nadesar, Alageswary Alagiah, Maheswary Alalasundaram (Sri Lanka); brother-in-law K. Alvapillai (Canada) and all their families.

His family wishes to thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and assisted them in various ways - 60 Blake Lane, New Malden, Surrey KT3 6NX.



Mr. Kandiah Gangatharan, Retired Director of Social Services, Jaffna; Retired Interpreter, Immigration Department of Canada; beloved husband of Kanagasothy; loving father of Ravisuthan (Canada), Manjula (UK), Dr. Mathisuthan (USA); father-in-law of Shivani (Canada), Dr. Sivananthan (UK), Sumathi (USA); grandfather of Nayanah, Nilani, Arun, Praveen and Nishani passed away in Canada on 21.3.95 and was cremated on 22.3.95. The members of the family thank all the friends and relatives, who sent messages of sympathy and consoled with them during

their time of great sorrow - 1 Vernal Close, Abbeymead, Gloucester. GL4 7FW. Tel: 01452 372198.



Dr. Ruby Pararajasegaram. The death occurred of Ruby Pararajasegaram, beloved wife of Dr. Ramachandra Pararajasegaram, (Ophthalmologist, World Health Organization, Geneva) and loving mother of Dr. Geeta Chandramohan (Los Angeles), Dr. Meera Manavalan (Madras) and Dr. Priya Venkataramakrishnan (Hull, UK), on 10 June 1995, in Madras, following a long illness bravely borne. Her mortal remains were cremated at Madras the same day.

Dr. Ruby Pararajasegaram who hailed from Kerala, India was an ophthalmologist in her own right and specialised in ophthalmic genetics. She was Head of the Department of Ophthalmology at the Lady Hardinge Medical College in New Delhi and later served at the Eye Hospital, Colombo and with her husband in private practice in Colombo and Jaffna.

Second Death Anniversary

10th June 1995
 In Ever Loving Memory
 of

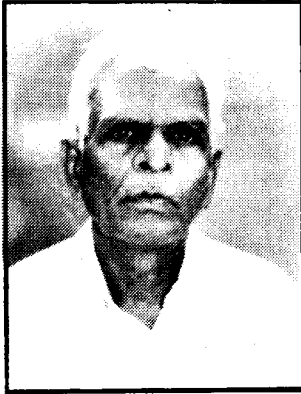
**Kanagambihai
 Ragunathan**

May the Good Lord
 Sathia Sai Baba
 Bless and keep you in
 His Loving Care.

Remembered by your loving husband Ragun; son Sri; daughter-in-law Saku; grandson Vishva; sister Kanagaluksmi Thirunavukarasu of Mallakam; sister-in-law Puvenswary Nadarajah; brothers-in-law Rajanathan, Paramanathan (all of Canada), Pathmanathan of U.K.; nephews, nieces and children and friends - 173 Mammoth Hall Trail, Scarborough, Ontario, Canada. Tel: 416 754 2521.



IN MEMORIAM



In loving memory of **Sinner Sivasubramaniam** of Kantharmadam, Jaffna on the first anniversary of his passing away on 26th May 1994.

An Athma Shanthi Poojah in his memory on his First Death Anniversary was held in Thiruchenthoor Murugan Temple in India.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his children Sotheeswery Shanmuganathan, Dr. (Mrs.) Sathialuxmy Selvadurai and Parameswaran Sivasubramaniam; son-in-law Selvadurai and grandchildren Radhika, Sangeetha, Lakshmanan and Kishami - 'Shanmugeswarar Akam', 4 Clarendon Gardens, Stone, Dartford, Kent DA2 6EZ.



In loving memory of **Mr. Sivaguru Mahadevan** on the third anniversary of his passing away on 5th June 1992.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his beloved wife Jayanthi; loving children Kalaivani, Gajan and Haran; mother Selvapakiam Sivaguru; brothers Pathmanaban and Dr. Ganeshan; Mrs. Jayeswary Narendra and Mrs. Vimaladevi Thyagarajah; several nephews, nieces and friends. - 31 Tamarisk Gardens, Bittern Park, Southampton SO2 4RA.



In ever loving memory of **Mr. B. Sivagananathan** on the fourth anniversary of his passing away on 22.6.91.

Remembered with love and affection by his step mother Mrs. Rajaletchumy Balasubramaniam; wife Kamala; brothers Dr. Sivaloganathan, Thirunavukkarasu, Radhakrishnan and Sritharan; sisters Mrs. Gowri Pathmanathan, Mrs. Bhagawathy Mohanadas, Mrs. Mangayarkkarasi Jetheendran and Mrs. Jayanthi Kumaranayagam - 9 Upton Close, Park Street, St. Albans, Herts, UK. Tel: 01727 873537.



In loving memory of **Mrs. Bagavathy Balasingam** on the second anniversary of her passing away on 13th June 1993.

'The mother who bore you, the father who fostered you and the teacher who opened your eye to the mystery of Nature in and around, have all to be revered'.

'The Soul (Atma) does not die; only the body dies. When man knows this, death loses its sting, death is not feared, death is but a welcome voyage into the known harbour', Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by her loving sons Balaraman (UK) and Aurobindo (USA); daughters-in-law Mallika Devi and Myriam; grand children Priyadharshini and Natasha - 62 Eversleigh Road, East Ham, London E6 1HQ. Tel: 0181 470 2371.



You were a great man
So noble and gentle
Whom we all miss
And will never forget.

In loving memory **Mr. S.D. Balarajah** on the first anniversary of his passing away on 8.6.94.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his beloved wife Pathmawathy; children Usha, Prabah, Geetha, Subathira and Bahirathan; sons-in-law Indramohan and Rohan; grand children Luxshika and Karthika; other members of the family and friends. - 21 Haydon Park Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 8JQ. Tel: 0181 543 8210.



In treasured memory of **Mrs. Sowpakiam Sinnadurai**, beloved wife of the late Mr. S.T. Sinnadurai, J.P. (Founder of Leela Press and Leela Group of Companies, Sri Lanka) on the second anniversary of her passing away on 25th June 1993.

Sadly missed and lovingly remembered by sons Sundaralingam (Sri Lanka), Dr. Somasegaram (UK), Arulanantham, Dhesabandu, Loganathan, Dhanabala (all of Sri Lanka), Sockanathan (USA), and Ravindran (Sri Lanka); daughters-in-law, grand children and great grand children - 69 Wansunt Road, Bexley, Kent DA5 2DJ. Tel: 01322 525170.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

July 1 Chathurthi: 6.30pm Narthana Kalalaya presents Bharata Natyam by the three Sisters Sujatha, Ameera & Gunalogie in aid of Durga Devasthanam Orphans' Trust, Tellipallai at Acton Assembly Hall, High Street, Acton, London W3. Tel: 0181 807 1517/509 1263.

July 2 Manickavasagar Gurupoojah.

July 3 Feast of St. Thomas.

July 4 Aani Uththiram: Feast of St. Elizabeth.

July 8 Eekathasi.

July 10 Pirathosam.

July 11 Feast of St. Benedict.

July 12 Full Moon.

July 13 Feast of St. Henry.

July 16 Schools over 40 Cricket Carnival at South Bank University Sports Grounds, Turney Road, Dulwich, London SE21. Tel: 0181 203 1191/771 3426.

July 18 Aadi Sevvai.

July 22 Karthigai; Feast of St. Mary Magdalene.

July 23 Eekathasi.

July 25 Pirathosam: Feast of St. James.

July 26 Feast of Sts. Joachim and Anne.

July 27 Adi Amavasai.

July 29 9.00am J.S.S.A. (UK) Cricket and Netball Festival at Warren Farm Sports Centre, Windmill Lane, Southall, Middx. Tel: 0181 743 8289/399 7848/241 5881.

July 29 2.00pm Milap presents Flute Recital by K. Jananayagam at Royal Philharmonic Hall, Hope Street, Liverpool. Tel: 0151 5318180.

July 31 Chathurthi.

At the Bhawan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 0171 381 3086/4608.

July 14 7.00pm Dance Ballet on Lord Krishna's Life by Indian Music Society, University of London.

July 16 6.30pm Sarod by Partho Sarathy.

Tamil Orphans' Trust presents Carnatic Vocal Recitals by Amudha Isai Vaani **Smt Sudha Ragunathan** on:

July 1 6.30pm at Holy Cross Convent School Hall, Sandal Road, New Malden, Surrey.

July 2 5.30pm at Winston Churchill Hall, Pinn Way off Bury Street, Ruislip, Middx.

July 9 5.30pm at Waltham Forest Theatre, Lloyd Park, Winns Terrace, Walthamstow, London E17.

Sanga Abhisekham of New Amman Temple



The Sanga Abhisekham with 108 Sangus of the New Rajarajeswari Amman Temple at Dell Lane off Dell Road, Stoneleigh, Epsom, Surrey was performed on the final day of the Mandala Abhisekham by the Chief Priest, Peria Pattam Swaminatha Sivacharyar of Thiruvannamalai, South India with the assistance of several other priests commencing at 9am on 21st May 1995. The temple was overflowing with devotees from all over U.K.

The poojah times are 8.30am to 1pm on Mondays to Thursdays, 8.30am to 2pm on Fridays to Sunday, 5.30pm to 9.30pm daily. The temple is open all day on Special Festival Days.

A Play From Jaffna

The Centre for Performing Arts in Jaffna is a cultural organisation aiming to preserve, foster and develop the cultural heritage of the Tamils of Sri Lanka. Its motto is 'Serve the Lord through the Arts' and it stresses spiritual and moral values in all its activities.

Above all it operates from the war zone in the north and produces and performs plays not only in Jaffna but also in other parts of Sri Lanka, mainly in Colombo. Its performances in Colombo are widely appreciated. It proclaims to the rest of the world that they are dreaming of peace.

Professor N.M. Saveri is the livewire of this group of talented artistes, who are due to undertake a Cultural tour of the West in September this year. They will travel to Italy, Germany, Switzerland, France, Canada and London to meet other artistes, perform and exchange ideas.

Fourteen-year-old, London-born Sowjana, who was in Colombo when Prof. Saveri's group performed in a Drama Festival sponsored by the Government at John de Silva Music Hall which was packed to capacity with literary critics, Government Ministers, Artistes and Colombo's elite has reviewed the performance below.

Review: 'In every culture, children are the most valuable assets and deserve the concern and attention of society as a whole'. This was the theme of a play which I can best describe as extremely moving. The play was performed by 14 children all below the age of 12. The children were from Thirumarai Kalamamram, an institute for performing arts. Father N.M. Saveri who runs the institute holds a Ph.D. in Saiva Sithaantham. To arrive in Colombo, the children had spent 36 hours to travel all the way from Jaffna.

Their play was based on life in the war torn North, a subject used by many drama and theatre groups. However this production was unique in that it was a 'wordless play' driving home effectively the truth of the dictum 'Actions speak louder than words'.

The first scene opened with all the children, innocently playing. Suddenly the stage was drowned in darkness, then there was a sudden flash and an ear-piercing roar. As the lights came back, the children were lying on the ground. Slowly, one by one they got up, but now, each had a terrible disability, for example one had lost her sight and another his legs. The child that I found touching was the boy who had brain damage; while the other children sat crying over their misfortune, he simply laughed and frowned alternately, unable to interpret the situation.

The children all conveyed their feelings and emotions beautifully. I could almost feel their pain. The audience most of whom were now reduced to tears, sat captivated by the emotional tension the children had created without saying a single word. It was almost as though the slightest utterance would be a distraction.

The play continued elaborating, on how each child was affected by the bombshells, and how they are attacked from land, sea and air. While watching the play I began to realise that these children are not re-enacting what they rehearsed, they were reconstructing the events that surrounded them in everyday life.

The children gave a moving yet impressive performance and as another member of the audience said, 'By performing in Colombo they are building bridges of understanding and peace'.

Sowjana Wimal Sockanathan.

New York Tamil Sangam Honours Bombay Sisters



Bombay Sisters C. Saroja and C. Lalitha were awarded the title of Tamilk Kalai

Vaani by the New York Tamil Sangam at a function held in New York City on 4.6.95. The award was presented by Dr. M.N. Krishnan, President of the Sangam. Dr. Krishnan, Saroja, Lalitha and Dr. (Mrs.) Shashikala Krishnan appear in above picture. The title awarded in recognition of the lifetime achievement of the Bombay sisters - who have been singing together for more than thirty years - in the field of Tamil traditional arts, music and culture was instituted this year to commemorate 25 years of service of the Sangam to the American Tamil community.

The Bombay Sisters were chosen to be the very first recipients of this award due to their tenure of excellence in the field of Tamil traditional music and in gratitude for the great efforts made by them to render non Tamil musical compositions translated into Tamil so that they would reach a wider Tamil speaking audience.

The Sisters have been on a concert tour of the States for two months.

Sadhana's Arangetram



The Bharata Natya Arangetram of Kuman Sadhana, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Manoharan of North Harrow, Middlesex took place at the Logan Hall, London WC1 on 29th April 1995.

Sadhana is the first student of her Guru Smt Rajini Shureshkumar, Director, 'Institute of Kalabharath' to have her Arangetram. Though it was her arangetram Sadhana showed a lot of maturity in dance, especially in her bhava and nritya. She has brought fame to her Guru who is herself a talented dancer and teacher.

The music for the arangetram was of a high standard and was well received by the appreciative audience. The programme

was compered by the evergreen Sri Wimal Sockanathan. The orchestra consisted of Smt Rajini Shureshkumar – Nattuvangam; Smt Ambika Thamotheeram – Vocal; Sri A. Somasundera Desigar – Mirdangam; Sri L. Kothandapani – Violin; Sri P. Gnanavarathan – Flute; and Sri K. Sithamparanathan – Morsing.

Hartley Kalai Vasantham

Hartley College Past Pupils' Association (UK) had its annual Kalai Vasantham at South Norwood, London SE25 on 13th May. The proceedings started with the lighting of the traditional oil lamp by the Chief Guests Dr. & Mrs. K. Thiyagarajah, both past pupils of Hartley. Dr. K. Sivakumar, President of the Association addressed the guests.

The programme of the evening included the School Anthem in Tamil, Kannan Dance, Instrumental Ensemble and Bharatha Natyam all splendidly performed by children of Hartleyites and friends. Highlights of the day included a brilliant vocal concert by Mrs. Mathini Sriskantharajah and a Tamil comedy drama by Mr. S. Yogarajah and group titled 'Pavama Punniam Paramasivane', an extremely hilarious farce decrying social evils. Mr. V. Santhalingam organised the items and functioned as Master of Ceremonies and the secretary Mr. P. Harichandran proposed the vote of thanks. The function was attended by over 400 Hartleyites and friends and was well received.

Skylink Travel & Airlanka Entertain Scottish Agents

Skylink Travel and Airlanka entertained their Scottish travel agents at a luncheon on 24th March 1995 at 'The Inn on the Green'. Twenty five travel agents were introduced to Sri Lanka and AirLanka through a video presentation and detailed explanation of the Skylink Travel Package Holidays to Sri Lanka, which was well received.



Mr. Manog Gunawardena, Sales Manager, AirLanka; Mr. G.S. Bhambra, Chairman, Skylink Travel and Mr. S. Sivasubramaniam, Marketing Manager, Skylink Travel, presented the first prize of a return air ticket to Colombo on Airlanka to the winner of the raffle.

Festival of Cricket 1995

The Seventh Annual Seven-a-Side Festival of Cricket organised by the Sri Lankan Old Boys' Association in U.K. was held at the new very spacious venue of Norman Park, Bromley in south east London on 29th May 1995 – Bank Holiday Monday.

The final match was between St. John's Jaffna and Nalanda, last year's champions. The match resulted in a win for St. John's.



St. Johns, Jaffna, 1995 Champions

The highlight of the day was the International Match between the Sri Lankan Cavaliers and the International Cavaliers. The former was led by the Sri Lankan Test captain Arjuna Ranatunge and the other players were Hashan Tillekeratne, Chaminda Vaas, Romesh Kaluwitharana, Sanjeeva Ranatunge, Promodaya Wickremasinghe, Eric Upashantha and Muthiah Muralitharan. The International Cavaliers were captained by Chris Cowdrey and the other players were Derek Pringle, Graham Thorpe, Gus Logie, Roger Harper, Paul Downton and Graham Cowdrey. The Sri Lankan Cavaliers won by 2 runs.

The weather was pleasant and there were several stalls serving exotic Sri Lankan hot food and plentiful Sri Lankan chilled 'Three Coins' beer. The large crowds were entertained by the good cricket and enjoyed a good day's outing.

Shobana Sreetharan's Vina Arangetram

This was an arangetram par excellence held on 6th May. Shobana began her recital with an Ata Tala varnam in Kanada raga. Flawless rendering in two speeds. Her brief alapana in Hamsadvani had the appropriate musical phrases to bring out the raga's form and the kriti 'Vatapi' was played with charm and vigour. Her raga alapana in Hindola followed by Sri Tyagaraja's composition 'Samajavaragamana' and the kalpana swaras were played beautifully. Shobana has a very good sense of tala. She went on to play the pancharatna in Arabhi with uncanny ease.

The Atana kirtana 'Ni Irankayenil' also had the necessary delicate gamakas played well. The raga alapana of Ramapriya was truly classical and well sequenced. I was very much taken up with this and the kriti 'Korinavara'. The piece in Kathanakutukalam, 'Raghuvamsa sudha', was lively and pleasing. Shobana then went on to the Ragam Tanam Pallavi in Kharaharapriya. I felt that the raga alapana and tanam could have been lengthened a little more. The pallavi, anuloma and the improvised swaras were executed well.

Shobana is a young and talented musician. she is only thirteen and I am confi-

dent that she will excel in this field with the care and encouragement given by her parents.

Srimati Sivasakti Sivanesan, her Guru deserves to be highly complimented for tutoring Shobana to rise to this level in Carnatic Music. 'Sabash' Sivasakti.

A special mention about the mridangam accompanist, Sri M. Balachandar. His scintillating performance and encouragement given to the young performer, was noteworthy. The 'tani avartanam' by Sri M. Balachandar and Sri R.N. Prakash, was quite captivating with dexterous rhythmical artistry. The Vina Arangetram of Shobana Sreetharan was a great success to Shobana and her Guru, Srimati Sivasakti Sivanesan.

Saraswathi Packiarajah,
(Sangita Vidwan).

Kalabhavanam

Kalabhavanam's June 4th scheduled performance had an unexpected bonus in the form of a visiting artiste Unni Krishnan the current heart throb of Madras. On his way back from the States, he was located and brought to the Willis Road auditorium unannounced and it was gracious of him to sing for an hour with the accompaniment of Kothandapani on the violin and Somasundara Desikar on the mridangam. The excellent fare attracted a sizeable audience unusually.

The main programme that evening was a very pleasing flute recital by Gnanavardan the young musician who has already made a mark in the London circle. His handling of the flute and smooth blowing with suddha sruti is very attractive. He is an added welcome to London music circle. Kothandapani on the violin and Somu on the mridangam complemented the troupe.

CANADIAN NEWSLETTER

Weekend Camps

The Senior Tamils Centre has come up with an innovative program of weekend camps in summer this year for members of the Tamil Community. Some of the goals of this project are (a) strengthen community ties (b) enjoy a residential recreational experience (c) increase recreational skill levels (d) support community leadership.

The project is funded by the Government of Ontario. The camping has been arranged at the Boltan Camp and Conference Centre, which is an hour's drive from Toronto. About 400 persons are expected to participate and the scheduled dates of the camps are as follows:-

1. Youth Camp – May 19th to 21st (already held). 2. Seniors/Adults – July 21st to 23rd. 3. Families – August 11th to 13th. 4. Seniors/Adults – Sept 1st to 3rd.

19 girls and 15 boys from different Universities, Schools and Associations in Toronto participated in the Youth Camp held in May.

Seminar on Our Heritage and Our Vision in Winnipeg

The Friends of Eelam Inc., 6 Dalhousie Drive, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 2Y7 are holding a 3 day seminar commencing on July 28th in Manitoba's beautiful Riding Mountain National Park. The participants are limited to 100 and the seminar topics include (a) Historical Landmarks of the Dravidian people (b) Tamils before and after 1500 A.D.

For more information please contact Richards on 416 281 1651.

Demonstrations in Ottawa and Toronto

Over 3000 Tamils converged on Parliament Hill, Ottawa on June 5th demanding Canadian Government support and drawing attention of the international community to the liberation struggle of the Tamil community to establish a Tamil homeland. A further demonstration is planned for June 17th in Toronto.

Ontario Provincial Elections

The Ontario Provincial Elections were held on 8th June and there has been a change of government. The Progressive Conservatives have come to power with their commitment to a balanced budget and welfare instead of welfare.

AUSTRALIAN NEWS LETTER

Muthamizh Malai and Award Night

The Australian Tamil Foundation presented its Annual Muthamizh Malai and Award Night on 20th May at Bankstown Town Hall, Sydney. Tamil students who had achieved a Tertiary Entrance Rank of over 90% in the New South Wales Higher School Certificate examination are rewarded with trophies and awards at this function along with a variety entertainment.

The proceedings commenced with an invocation song by Amirithi Yogeswaran and was followed by a children's carnatic orchestra organised by Ravindrakumar Samivel and items of Bharatha Natyam by Natanalaya dancers, disciples of Mrs. Jayalukshmy Kandiah.

Mr. Keith Owen, State Director of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs addressed the gathering and congratulated the Tamil students on their achievements and wished the foundation well in its work for the Tamil community. He launched 'Tamil Chuddar' the Tamil Journal of the Foundation.

Kumudhini Kugathasan who had scored 99.9% in the H.S.C. won the Dr. V. Rasanayagam Memorial Trophy and an award donated by Dr. & Mrs. S.N. Ananda. The other award winners were Arunkumar Thiagarajan, Dev Jairam, Anusha Kan-gatharan, Jaikrishnan Sangaran, Malini

Magesan and Kanthaley Kailanathan.

After the intermission there was a percussion orchestra presented by Ganalayam and organised by Mr. Suthanthiraraj followed by a Tamil vocal music group presented by Geetha Rajayogam and a delightful comedy drama presented by Kamathenu Kalanjijyam. The comperes were Nitya Patanjali and Manu Narayana-samy, last year's award winners.

Kalappai

Kalappai, is a quarterly magazine published by the Sydney University Tamil Society. The society held a seminar on 21st May to discuss ways of raising the standard of the magazine. A lively discussion on its aims, the type of articles that would cater to the readers, whether the articles should be in pure Tamil or in language used in everyday life, how it compares with magazines from overseas countries and how the community benefits. Those interested in contributing articles are requested to contact the Coordinator, Mr. P. Ketheeswaran, P.O.Box 40, Wentworth Building, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia.

Demonstration in Sydney

The Eelam Tamil Association held a well attended demonstration at Martin Place, Sydney on 3rd June to protest against the bombing and shelling of the Jaffna peninsula by the Sri Lankan armed forces, the enforcement of the economic blockade, the killing of unarmed Tamil civilians and the general violation of Human Rights in Tamil areas.



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