

Tamil

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LTTE Leader Velupillai Pirabhakaran

WOMAN OF THE REVOLUTION



Vivienne Goonewardene, the leftist veteran

INSIDE

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of what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it."*

-Voltaire

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NEWS REVIEW

Pirabhakaran Indicted Govt Closing all Doors, Says LTTE

Besides the several battle fronts in the Sri Lanka's North-East, the authorities in Colombo would appear to have opened up a new front in the war against the Tamil Tigers by charging their leader in absentia over a widely condemned bombing. A suicide bomber rammed a truck packed with explosives into the island's Central Bank on 31 January this year, devastating part of Colombo's commercial heartland and causing one of the greatest shocks in the 13-year ethnic war.

Despite accusations, the LTTE has neither accepted nor denied responsibility for the bombing.

The indictment filed by Sri Lanka's Attorney-General Sarath Nanda Silva in the High Court of Colombo charges Pirabhakaran and nine other LTTE members of leading rank for complicity in the bomb attack.

The indictment against the LTTE leader contains 712 charges brought under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, including murder and causing damage worth billions of rupees. The central bank bombing killed 78 people and wounded at least 500.

No one believes that the Sri Lankan security forces will be able to apprehend Pirabhakaran alive and bring him before a court to face the charges. Everyone knows that he wears a cyanide capsule around his neck, as all Tamil Tigers do, and he will take a bite at it and commit suicide the moment he suspects that he is in danger of being captured.

LTTE Reaction

In reacting to the formal indictment against their leader, Tamil Tigers have warned the Sri Lankan government that charging their leader in absentia would do nothing to end the country's 13-year ethnic war.

"The government is gradually closing doors to all possible ways to solve the ethnic problem," the LTTE's official newspaper Eelanatham said in an editorial on 16 October.

Commenting for the first time on the government's indictment of Pirabhakaran, the paper said: "World history has shown an extreme growth in liberation struggles when governments try to crush them."

"The government can ban or bring charges against LTTE, but these actions are not going to bring any changes in the political and military situations prevailing in the country," the newspaper said adding that the Tigers would not give up the struggle for an independent homeland.

Politicians and analysts said the indictment of Tamil Tiger leader Pirabhakaran in the January bombing of the island's central bank appeared to be a new offensive in a propaganda war.

This is the first time Pirabhakaran has been indicted by the Colombo government despite the many crimes that he had been accused of since 1975 when Jaffna's Mayor Alfred Duraiappah was gunned down, a murder which Pirabhakaran confessed to carrying out in an interview with the much respected Indian fortnightly, "India Today".

"A publicity campaign could well be the real intention of the government," said Rajavarothiam Sampanthan, who is Secretary-General of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), which had been in the forefront of advocating and articulating Tamil aspirations until it was forced out of the mainstream by Tamil militant groups, including the LTTE, which resorted to armed violence against not only the government, but also the TULF and its leaders who became victims of assassination.

"Highlighting the fact Pirabhakaran has been indicted in respect of an incident which has caused so much loss of civilian lives and the destruction of properties will go well with the international campaign against terrorism," Sampanthan said. Political analysts said the government might have decided to indict the LTTE leader instead of formally banning the group to prod the West to crack down on rebel activity. "The government had pondered over a formal ban on the Tigers. This could be the first step in that direction or an alternative to such an action," an Asian diplomat said. "Whatever the case, it has political and symbolic significance," he said adding "If Pirabhakaran is convicted, Colombo could ask its allies to restrict his supporters' activities" in foreign countries.

Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu of the Centre for Policy Alternatives, said: "The government is taking steps in order to remain

at the forefront of publicity that the LTTE is a terrorist organisation."

There is no doubt that the government has been seriously considering a formal proscription of the LTTE as a terrorist organisation and hardliners in the government are pushing for it. In view of the opposition to the move from other Tamil parties which support the government in parliament, the government is said to be taking a cautious approach at present while preparing the ground both locally and internationally for a formal ban of the LTTE.

The move to indict the LTTE leader had been made reportedly after several Western nations assured Colombo they would help curb fund-raising by the Tamil Tigers.

Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister G.L. Peiris said after a visit to the United States this month that Washington was expected to include the LTTE on a list of terrorist groups, being drawn up for completion probably by the end of this year.

Canada and Germany also told Sri Lanka they were taking steps to curb fund-raising for "terrorist groups" in their countries.

Government officials said some ministers and military leaders were pushing for a ban on the LTTE, hoping it would help limit the rebels' international propaganda and funding.

"Banning the LTTE limits your options and narrow your freedom to manoeuvre," Saravanamuttu said. "Maintaining pressure on them on the diplomatic front, on the battlefield and on the political front is where it actually counts in substance," he said.

Kilinochchi Falls Under Army Control

After a battle between government forces and the Tamil Tigers that lasted nearly a week, the northern town of Kilinochchi which had remained the military and political bastion of the LTTE since their evacuation from Jaffna at the end of last year fell into army control according to an announcement on 29 September by the Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence.

The army offensive began on 22 September in which over 15,000 troops took part. Flanked by tanks and artillery, troops advanced from Paranthan as airforce bombers and helicopter gunships pounded alleged LTTE positions to assist the army's push.

Kilinochchi did not fall to the army easily. Though the civilians had fled the town and its adjoining areas before the real battle began, the army had to encounter fierce resistance from the Tigers. Casualties on both sides had reportedly been excessively high. As many as 230 soldiers including officers were killed and over 300 wounded. The army claimed that over 700

Tigers were killed and 600 wounded though according to LTTE reports the army's claim was wildly exaggerated.

The Tigers would appear to have suffered the most number of casualties when they launched a counter-attack involving thousands of cadres, many of them from their Women's Wing, on 26 September. Reports said that wave after wave of Tigers with explosives strapped around their bodies advanced with a view to breach the army's defence lines. The military admitted to 75 soldiers being killed and 146 wounded during the Tiger counter-attack, but claimed to have killed over 400 Tigers though the LTTE admitted to the death of 90 of their fighters. The ICRC declined to accept from the army scores of dead bodies of Tiger cadres to be handed over to the LTTE because ICRC did not have the practical or logistical facilities to undertake the task in the war-zone.

It would seem that the aim of capturing Kilinochchi is to facilitate the reopening of the highway between Jaffna and Vavuniya in the mainland. Deputy Minister of Defense, Anuruddha Ratwatte said the military would try to reopen a highway through 70 km (45 miles) of Tiger-held territory to secure a land supply route to Jaffna, which is now supplied by air and sea. "That is a requirement...We want to open up all the highway and make life normal," he said.

However, diplomats and defence analysts have doubted whether the army can reopen the highway to Jaffna. About 30 percent of the 100,000-strong army was already tied up in Jaffna to maintain security there. "The troops are just spread too thin for them to make such a huge thrust and sustain it," one Asian diplomat said.

The capture of Kilinochchi, besides being of some strategic significance, has given the military the much needed boost to its morale especially after its recent debacle at Mullaitivu. The well informed columnist Taraki says, "The capture of Kilinochchi has given the government a remarkable advantage, despite the heavy price paid in pursuing its strategy in the north. It is certainly a further step in the overall plan to bring all the population centres in the northeast under army control, denying, thereby, financial, material and administrative resources which the LTTE availed itself of Eelam War II - this being considered the basis of Prabhakaran's semi-conventional military power.... Although, according to an agency report, the only living creature that the forces had found in the town on Sunday was a stray dog, the significance of the town's fall cannot be underestimated in any way."

Censorship Lifted

The Sri Lankan government on 8 October lifted the censorship of news on the country's ethnic war, imposed on the domestic media earlier this year. "The censorship is lifted with immediate effect,"

Media Minister Dharmasiri Senanayake told a news conference in Colombo.

The censorship was imposed just before government forces launched the final phase of their offensive against the Tamil Tigers in their northern Jaffna peninsula stronghold.

The censorship, which did not affect the foreign correspondents operating in the island, but prevented the publication of war-related news in the domestic media, has been the subject of severe criticism by local journalists and human rights organisations.

The government said the gag on war news was required to prevent leaks of military secrets and attempts to provoke violence between the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils. But local newspapers have argued that the censorship was being used to cover up military blunders and corruption.

Tigers Deplore Refugees' Plight

The LTTE has accused the Sri Lankan government of not providing food to northern Tamil civilians displaced by the latest military, but aid workers said medicine was more urgently required.

Hundreds of thousands of Tamils, displaced by the army's push last month to capture Kilinochchi, faced starvation as the government refused to distribute food and other aid to them, a statement issued on 9 October by the Tigers from London said. "Even rudimentary help such as dry rations had not been given to them," said the statement. "Both governmental and non-governmental organisations have totally ignored them," the statement, faxed to news agencies, added.

Western aid workers operating in the war-torn areas were cautious in declining to comment on claims of starvation but noted the prevalence of undernutrition among refugees.

"We see undernutrition, but unlike malnutrition it has no serious effect on their health," said Frances Stevenson, coordinator for the French aid agency Medecins Sans Frontieres. "We're working in several hospitals in the area, but we actually have observed no malnutrition," Stevenson told reporter. Other aid workers said the government did not consider as refugees nearly half of an estimated 400,000 people who fled their homes in Jaffna at the instigation of the LTTE to the rebel territory of the Wanni since last March. "It seems that the government feels these people had no valid reasons to flee and hence are not entitled to food rations," said an aid worker who declined to be identified. "But many are living with friends or relatives and seem not to be having problems finding food."

Stevenson said she was more con-

cerned about the shortage of medicine, which was likely to affect displaced people as monsoon rains arrive in the Wanni. "The government is still not granting permission for medical supplies to come freely into the region. Therefore all basic essential drugs, from antibiotics to painkillers, are in short supply," she said adding that malaria was on the rise and would develop into an epidemic if anti-malaria drugs were not made available soon.

The military said it has already given clearance for medicines for the last quarter to be shipped to the Wanni. "But about medicines we're a bit more cautious since we know that wounded Tigers mix with civilians to seek treatment at medical centres," a military spokesman told reporters, as if the wounded Tigers are not entitled to be treated, adding "Civilians getting medical treatment is fine, but LTTE cadres getting treatment can pose a problem for us."

Navy Stops Tamils fleeing to India

A Sri Lankan navy vessel intercepted a boat carrying 105 Tamils fleeing to southern India, military officials said on 7 October.

The refugees, including 33 women and 40 children, had come from Kilinochchi, the scene of a fierce battle between government troops and the Tamil Tigers, they said. They alleged that the Tigers had prevented the Tamils from Kilinochchi from going to government-run refugee camps in Vavuniya.

An estimated 200,000 Tamil refugees are on the move in the rebel-held jungle area of the Wanni after the army captured Jaffna peninsula in April and Kilinochchi at the end of last month.

Sri Lankan officials said 2,500 Tamil refugees had made the narrow crossing between Sri Lanka and India's southern state of Tamil Nadu since July, when the army first launched its offensive on Kilinochchi.

Refugee Boat Detained

Sri Lanka's navy seized a boat carrying 110 Tamil refugees trying to flee to neighbouring India, a navy spokesman said on 16 October.

A navy gunboat intercepted the boat during the night off Mannar island, 240 km (150 miles) north of Colombo and escorted it back to Mannar, he said.

"The frequency of the flow of refugees appears to be increasing," he said. "The terrorists are encouraging people to leave saying there could be problems in Mannar."

A statement from the LTTE said a boat with 110 refugees capsized in the same area on the same day and that 14 people, including eight children, drowned when

the boat capsized. The others were saved by other boats.

The navy spokesman said he had no information on the LTTE's claim. The navy has intercepted almost 300 refugees trying to flee to India this month, he added accusing the Tigers of charging each refugee 4,000 to 6,000 rupees (\$70-\$105) for the ride across the 35 km (20 mile) Palk Strait between Mannar and India's southern state of Tamil Nadu.

Indian authorities have said more than 2,500 refugees have made the crossing since July after the army went on the offensive against the rebels in north Sri Lanka.

India has promised to stem the flow of Tamil refugees from northern Sri Lanka across the Palk Straits in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The promise was given to the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar who met his Indian counterpart Inder Kumar Gujral in New York during the UN General Assembly sessions in early October to brief Mr. Gujral about the situation in northern Sri Lanka.

All Parties Should Support Peace Process, says Bishop

Addressing the 111th session of the Diocesan Council in Colombo recently, the Bishop of Colombo, the Rt. Rev. Kenneth Fernando, stressed the urgency for an end to the ongoing war and the need for support to the peace process from all major political parties in the south. "Our failure to agree on peace proposals even now may mean that we shall have to face up to even greater national calamities than those we have already suffered," the Bishop said.

The Bishop pointed out that a study of contemporary events had shown that the tragedy of war was that people's best efforts are employed to the people's worst. "The consequence of war is that it leaves the country with three armies. These are an army of cripples, an army of widows and an army of thieves."

Stating that war never solved problems, the Bishop said, "It only creates new ones. They do not establish which side is right, but only which side is stronger." "There have been times during the last two years when we have been hopeful and we were able to see the dawn of peace in the distance, but these hopes have been dashed to the ground and what we saw in the distance has proved to be a mirage," he added.

"Our government began negotiations for peace early in 1995. I myself personally know that those efforts were made sincerely. The very fact that I was personally invited by the President to join the government's Peace Delegation to the North is a token of the government's sincere intentions. I am personally aware of the strenuous efforts made by that delegation

to persuade the LTTE to respond positively to the government's peace overtures.

"We were extremely disappointed and surprised that the effort was unilaterally frustrated by the resumption of war by the LTTE on April 19, 1995. Since that time we have been seeing nothing but escalation of the war. We hope that at least now we have reached a climactic point and that there will be a de-escalation of the conflict and a resumption of negotiations for peace," the Bishop said.

Power Station Blasted

On 1 October, Tamil Tigers blasted power and telecommunications stations and attacked a police station killing 9 persons including policemen in the northwest town of Mannar.

Two generators at the power station were blasted and a simultaneous explosion at the nearby telecommunication centre disrupted about 25 percent of the town's telephone lines.

The Tigers attached explosive devices to the two stations, which are about 2,500 feet apart, and set the blasts off simultaneously during the night.

CRM Condemns Resurgence of Political Violence

The Civil Rights Movement (CRM) is appalled at the reappearance on our political scene of violence which has resulted in several deaths and many more injured. What is most horrifying is that these are the actions of extremist terrorist groups, of which Sri Lanka has certainly had its fill.

They are the result of clashes between supporters of the major parliamentary parties which claim to be wedded to democratic ideals, and which it is hoped, whether in their role in government or in opposition, would now help to restore that faith in the democratic process which had been seriously eroded in recent years.

There can be no excuse or justification for political thuggery. CRM is aware of and has documented many instances of such violence committed, instigated or condoned by the State during the last regime. The present government pledged to end that era.

During recent months CRM has felt increasingly alarmed at a series of violent clashes between UNP and PA supporters and has been seeking more information about them. Their context has ranged from co-operative society elections, and affixing of posters and banners, the disruption of meetings and rallies of political parties, and attacks on political activists including in their homes. They include incidents at Anamaduwa, Kuliapitiya, Matale, Anuradhapura, Piliyandala and Matugama. There were also the clashes amongst UNP

members themselves at Maligakanda.

The most recent killings in Negombo, however, make it necessary for defenders of civil liberties to raise their voices with no further delay. These incidents include the killing of a PA supporter and another and an attack on a church service commemorating the 50th anniversary of the UNP at the end of August, the shooting dead of four UNP members and a bystander last Friday, September 20, and the killing of a further UNP activist - a Pradeshiya Sabha Member the next day.

Such events, as well as denying the very right to life itself, place in jeopardy the freedom of association, assembly and expression, which are the bedrock of democracy. This is precisely why the CRM gave priority, in its document quoted at the beginning of this statement, to the genuineness of the belief of political parties in the right of their opponents to enjoy these freedoms. The CRM stresses the importance of these basic freedoms once again.

The CRM call on all democratic parties to make a public reaffirmation of their commitment to non-violence and to make it known in no uncertain terms to their own supporters that acts of thuggery, and taking the law into their own hands, whatever the provocation, will not be tolerated.

While calling upon the police to uphold the rule of law and to perform their duty effectively and impartially, the CRM emphasises the particular responsibility that lies upon supporters, members and leaders of those in power and the Head of State. Sri Lanka's recent political history has regrettably proved again and again that persons who enjoy or think they enjoy political patronage often feel they can break the law with impunity. This dangerous mindset has to be eliminated from our political life once and for all. In this context, CRM expresses its dismay at the alleged speech of the President as reported in the Lankadipa of September 17 parts of which could be construed as condoning of violence.

In the view of CRM this recent spate of killings and thuggery, though extremely serious, is not irreversible and a spiral of retaliatory violence still can and must be prevented by prompt and effective measures to restore and protect the right of free and peaceful political expression.

Suspected Bombers Held

A group of 20 suspected suicide bombers allegedly belonging to the LTTE were arrested near Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga's official residence, a police officer said on 9 October.

Colombo reports said that the arrests followed police warnings that between 25 and 30 suicide bombers belonging to the LTTE had sneaked into Colombo on a mission to retaliate against the successful military offensive in Kilinochchi which was captured from the Tigers at the end of September.

"A group of 20 suspected bombers were arrested at Colpetty area yesterday. They are now under interrogation," the officer at Colpetty Police Station told reporters. The President's official residence, called "Temple Trees", is located in the Colpetty area.

"The arrests were made during a six-hour search operation launched on information given by LTTE men already in custody that LTTE suicide bombers had infiltrated the Colpetty area," the officer said.

Govt's Anti-Tiger Propaganda Offensive

Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, recently called for international cooperation to ensure "terrorists" are denied safe haven anywhere in the world.

"The territory of any state should not be permitted to be used in any manner which would encourage or sustain terrorist activity in another," Kadirgamar said in a speech to the General Assembly.

"Fund raising activity on foreign soil in particular, either directly or indirectly through so-called charitable funds, must be prohibited," he said. "Concerted international cooperation is necessary to ensure that the terrorist does not enjoy safe havens anywhere in the world."

Making specific reference to the Tamil Tigers who are engaged in a war with government forces in Sri Lanka, Mr. Kadirgamar said this "extremist group does not in any meaningful sense represent the people they claim to fight for." "They have never sought a mandate from the people at an election. They have kept out of the democratic mainstream when many of the minority parties have entered the consultative process to seek redress for their grievances through democratic means," Kadirgamar said.

"Should terrorism be permitted, through international apathy, to fester, it would poison the international body politic, enervating democratic processes - processes the international community is obliged to sustain," he added.

He said the LTTE drew support in the form of money, equipment and war material, not from other states but from "misguided members of the Tamil community who live and work in the affluent countries" or through extortion, drug trafficking, gun-running, smuggling people and other illegal activities in many developed countries, abusing the hospitality and violating the laws of host governments.

Cambodian Connection

Cambodian First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh has said that his government would investigate reports that Sri Lanka's LTTE were shopping for

arms in Cambodia, a Reuter report dated 21 September said.

"We have no evidence, but the Sri Lankan Minister of National Defence wrote to us saying there had probably been sales of surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) from Cambodia through Thailand to Sri Lanka," Ranariddh said.

The fortnightly Phnom Penh Post on 20 September cited sources in Colombo as saying the Tamil Tigers were arranging the purchase and shipment of missiles from Cambodia, which they planned to use to defend their positions in Sri Lanka. The Post quoted a Sri Lankan diplomat as saying his government had received reliable reports LTTE arms procurer Selvarajah "KP" Pathmanathan and other LTTE members had been seen working out of Phnom Penh and Bangkok in the past two months.

"There are strong indications that the LTTE have set up a safe house in Phnom Penh, from where they engage in arms buying, drawing on lucrative sources of revenue such as passport and visa forging and heroin trading," the paper said.

U.S. to Curb Fund-raising

The United States is expected to help curb international fund-raising by the LTTE a cabinet minister said on 8 October according to Reuter report datelined 8 October.

Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister G.L. Peiris is reported to have told a news conference that U.S. State Department officials told him Washington would help Colombo fight "terrorism".

Peiris, just back from a highly publicised trip to Canada and the United States, said Washington was expected to include the LTTE on a list of terrorist groups being drawn up for completion probably by the end of this year.

"The (U.S.) officials who spoke to us were convinced that the LTTE would be one of the organisations that would appear on that list," he said. "That, of course, will tremendously help Sri Lanka in combating international terrorism."

Peiris said once the United States branded the LTTE as a terrorist group, its bank assets would be frozen and its members deported and barred from entering the country.

Colombo has said it believes Tamil rebels finance their military activity through funds extorted from expatriate Sri Lankans in Western countries.

"The focus (of the meetings) was very much on the question of fund-raising in these countries and the ways in which these activities could be controlled by the authorities in these countries," the Minister said.

Peiris, who led a Sri Lankan delegation, met senior State Department officials including Ambassador Philip Wilcox, the U.S. State Department's coordinator for counter-terrorism, and Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Robin Raphe. Wilcox said when he visited Colombo

August that Washington would stamp out illegal activities on U.S. soil directed against the government in Sri Lanka.

Australian Move

Following a meeting between the Foreign Ministers of Australia and Sri Lanka in New York recently, the Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer is reported to have stated that the his government would no longer meet with or entertain representations from any Tamil activist groups in Australia until they renounced violence or support for violent groups.

According to the Minister, the Australian government has already told Tamil groups active there that they had to first agree in writing to renounce violence before they can have any dealings with the government or Ministers.

Beefing up Air and Naval Power

Sri Lankan authorities are focusing their military buildup on air and naval forces in a bid to cut off arms supplies to Tamil according to military officials in Colombo.

"The most important thing is to dominate the sea, day and night at any cost," a Reuter report datelined 14 October said quoting an unnamed senior air force official. "If not, we can't end the war."

Most of the arms used by the LTTE are smuggled in from abroad in at least five merchant ships it used to own for arms smuggling, military. The air force and navy have destroyed two such rebel arms ships in the northern waters of the island in the past two years, one with the help of the Indian navy, he said.

"More emphasis is being given to meeting the threat at sea and to stop LTTE arms smuggling," said a senior navy official. "We want to expand our capability to operate in high seas and intercept and destroy LTTE arms ships. We're an island nation."

Budget estimates for 1997 presented to parliament recently show provisions for acquiring six twin-engined maritime patrol aircraft, the first time the air force is seeking dedicated maritime surveillance capability. The navy intends to acquire two multipurpose vessels to meet the LTTE's air, surface and underwater threats. Nine fast attack craft, two fast gunboats and a fleet of almost two dozen small inshore patrol craft are also to be acquired.

The navy is also planning to buy a high-speed hovercraft for amphibious operations and troop transport, officials said.

Deputy Finance Minister G.L. Peiris has said 1997 defence spending will be cut to 44 billion rupees (US\$786 million) from almost 50 billion rupees this year as the bulk of the arms is being bought this year. Defence spending was originally set

at 33.9 billion rupees this year but overshoot the budget as the government went on an arms-buying spree for intensified operations against the Tigers.

"We're spending so much on the war now because we did not spend it (in the past)," the air force official said. "We underestimated the LTTE." If the LTTE had not resumed the war in April 1995, all this spending would not have been necessary, he added.

In the past year or so the military has bought Mi-24 helicopter gunships, Mi-17 transport helicopters, An-32 transport planes and big guns from former Soviet Union states. It has also bought Kfir fighter jets, laser-guided bombs, an unmanned air vehicle for surveillance and Shaldag shallow draught waterjet-propelled fast attack craft from Israel.

China has sold it a corvette-type anti-submarine warfare vessel to counter the threat from LTTE underwater suicide squads in the past year, navy officials said.

Army Launches Recruitment Drive

The Sri Lankan army has launched a major recruitment drive following the recent upsurge in the war with the Tamil Tigers and heavy losses suffered in recent battles. The other reason for the drive to recruit more and more men is that as they capture more territory from the Tigers, large number of troops need to be stationed in those areas to hold on the captured territory.

"Our resources have weakened considerably and we want to recruit tens of thousands of soldiers," a military spokesman said on 15 September. He said more than 7,000 local government officials were involved in the nationwide programme and the military was running daily recruitment advertisements in local newspapers.

"We are now consolidating military positions in front areas and we will have to wait until we have enough resources before staging a major offensive," a senior military official told the press.

Until the recent capture of the northern Tiger-controlled town of Kilinochchi, the military balance has remained largely unchanged since LTTE handed the military its worst setback in the 13-year war in July when they overran a strategic army base.

The army launched an offensive soon after the LTTE wiped out the northeastern Mullaivu camp killing or capturing almost its entire garrison of 1,400 men. But the army's push, advancing south from the northern peninsula of Jaffna, remained stalled around the town of Kilinochchi, a gateway to the Tigers' jungle stronghold of Wanni.

"About 30 percent of the military's full strength has been kept in Jaffna since its recapture of the peninsula last April," an Asian diplomat said. "The government forces have also been weakened after a series of major offensives against the LTTE," he said.

"We will consolidate our positions until we have enough resources. We would like to clear the jungle area but we need a lot of resources to do that," an army brigadier said, asking not to be identified.

In a further attempt to bring back deserters into its fold, Sri Lanka's military on 18 October warned private companies not to employ deserters from the security forces.

"Deserters cannot be employed. According to the law, they cannot be protected by anyone other than their wives," a military spokesman said. Under civil and military law, anyone found harbouring a male deserter can face trial except the deserter's wife. Denying deserters the opportunity to take up other forms of gainful employment, the army authorities think, will compel deserters to return to barracks.

He said 1,400 deserters had been arrested by the military and sent back to their units, but did not say whether they had been punished. "We are stuck for manpower. If deserters return we would have our bayonet strength," the spokesman said.

Army deputy chief of staff Major General Srilal Weerasooriya said in an interview with the Daily News that President Chandrika Kumaratunga had proposed a scheme to provide foreign employment and jobs in the government sector to security forces personnel on completion of their military duty.

Britain Ready to Mediate

A senior British Minister said that his government was willing to mediate a settlement between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil Tigers who are locked in a fierce battle in the island's north and east.

Liam Fox, Under-Secretary of State at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, told a news conference on 27 September that London could play a third-party role to end the island's 14-year-old ethnic war if invited by Colombo and rebels.

"We are happy to offer our service in any conflict where both parties want us to be involved. But only when both parties are committed to a peaceful settlement is it possible for a third party to come in and be of use," he said.

Fox was on a five-day visit to Sri Lanka less than a month after British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind came here for talks with government leaders. He was due to travel to the northern frontline town of Vavuniya on a fact-finding mission during his stay.

He said the LTTE were unwilling at present to lay down their arms and agree to talks with the government. "I think it is quite clear at the moment the LTTE are not in a position where they wish to negotiate a political settlement," he said. Fox said the government of President

Chandrika Kumaratunga had not entirely closed the door to negotiating an end to the war. "My assessment is that the government understands this is not something which can be purely settled in a military sphere and that at the end of the day there has to be a negotiated settlement to the problems that face Sri Lanka," Fox said. "And I think that is a very useful start," he added.

Prisoner Exchange ?

A group of twenty-two Sri Lankan servicemen captured and detained by the LTTE for over two years is reported to have said in a letter on 13 September that they have been offered freedom in exchange for Tigers held in custody by the government.

The 22 prisoners sent a letter, a copy of which was released to the press, to opposition leader Ranil Wickremasinghe asking him to help secure their release.

Mr. Wickremasinghe has in a letter he wrote to the Deputy Defence Minister has urged the government to consider exchanging three captured Tamil rebels for 22 members of the security forces in guerrilla custody, his spokesman said on 6 October.

Among the 22 is a high ranking naval officer, Navy Commander. Boyododa, captured by the Tigers when they sank his patrol vessel, Sagarawadene, in a suicide attack in September 1994, on the eve of the commencement of peace talks between the government and the LTTE. The talks were later aborted with the LTTE resuming armed hostilities against government forces in April last year.

The letter quoted LTTE leaders as saying that the group had proposed to the government a swap of the 22 prisoners in exchange for three Tigers captured by the security forces.

The letter said the LTTE wanted the release of a Tiger cadre identified as "Kennedy" who was captured in an attack on an airbase and two female "Sea Tigers" known as "Mala" and "Uma" captured in the course of the Tiger attack on the Kankesanthurai harbour in northern Jaffna late last year. After their capture Mala and Uma were brought to Colombo. A few months later, they appeared on Sri Lanka TV giving details about their life and role in the LTTE's women's wing.

The letter signed by the 22 prisoners said, "Some leaders of the organisation (meaning the LTTE) told us on August 31 that they had put forward a suggestion to the government about exchanging prisoners. They informed us that if the government was willing to release three of their cadres, namely Kennady, Mala and Uma, they would consider releasing all of us. We believe that this is our last hope and an opportunity such as this may not come again. Exchanging of prisoners of war has been done throughout history on humanitarian grounds and this practice has continued to the present day. We would like to appeal to you to clarify our position and pressurise the government to secure our

release for the sake of our parents, wives and children and in the name of humanity."

HUMAN RIGHTS

Abuses in Army Controlled Jaffna

Increasing concerns are being expressed about reported human rights violations in the army-controlled northern Jaffna peninsula. Following continuing sporadic LTTE attacks on security service personnel, reports from Jaffna indicate that the army has been engaged in cordon and search operations, imposing restrictions on the movement of people and taking into custody of particularly young persons, both male and female. The whereabouts of some of those arrested remain unknown to the relatives.

Amnesty International in a statement dated 20 September calling for urgent action has referred to the "disappearance" of six persons, all from Kaithady in the Jaffna peninsula. Among them are two women and a 16 year old student from the same family.

Krishanthi Kumarasamy, from 'Kumaralayam', Kaithady, Jaffna, was taken into custody at an army sentry point between Chindikuli and Kaithady on 7 September 1996 around 10.30 am. She was arrested when returning home after sitting an examination at Chindikuli Girls School, Jaffna.

Her mother, Rasammah Kumarasamy, and her brother Pranaban Kumarasamy, together with a friend of the family, Kirupakaran Sithamparam, went in search of Krishanthi later that day. They were told by people in the area that Krishanthi was seen being arrested by the army at the sentry point. They went to the sentry point, and were seen reaching it between 4.30 and 5 pm. They have not been seen since. Relatives have made inquiries about all four persons at the sentry point, but soldiers denied taking any of them into custody.

Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham, MP belonging to the TULF, has made representations to President Mrs. Kumaratunga urging her to intervene to stop alleged human rights abuses by the army citing the example of an 18-year-old Tamil school-girl from Kaithady not far from the Jaffna town who - as well as her family who tried to locate her after she was arrested by the army - has been missing for more than a week.

Pararajasingham said the army had denied arresting Krishanthi Kumarasamy, her mother, brother and a family friend although there were eyewitnesses when the arrests occurred. "The denial of the army arresting any one of them causes alarm and suspicion that these four persons have "disappeared" while in custody of the

army," the MP's letter said. He further urged the President to order an impartial inquiry into the arrest of the four persons concerned and "give strict instructions to the security forces in Jaffna to adhere to your Excellency's guidelines pertaining to arrest."

Amnesty International has also learned that on August, Subramaniam, a municipal council worker, and Ganeshu Sri Ram, a student, were seen being taken into custody by the army at Kaithady. They were reportedly taken from their homes in the same neighbourhood by army personnel travelling in a truck. Since then, the local army officials have denied that these two persons are in their custody.

Amnesty International has also drawn attention to a recent report by the University Teachers for Human Rights (UTHR) (Jaffna), in respect of the disappearance of two persons from Jaffna, Ponnuthurai Sinnathurai, a tailor from Sangathanai, Jaffna district, and his assistant, Muhunthan, after they were seen being taken away in an army truck in the evening of 31 July 1996. Despite numerous appeals at various army camps in the area, their whereabouts remain unknown.

Earlier that day, both men were seen assisting soldiers who came to collect some clothes tailored by them. According to witnesses, at least one soldier later returned with a truck from the direction of Chavakachcheri army camp. Ponnuthurai Sinnathurai and Muhunthan together with their bicycles were loaded into the truck and taken away.

On 13 September, Amnesty International appealed to the Human Rights Task Force (HRTF) to investigate these 'disappearances'. It was informed on 16 September that their names are not on the lists of people detained in the Jaffna district as provided by the security forces. According to presidential directives, the HRTF has to be informed of arrests and detentions within 48 hours.

Amnesty International is urging the government to open a HRTF office in Jaffna. This would allow HRTF officers to visit places of detention on a regular basis and thus prevent torture and 'disappearances'. It would also provide an on-the-spot channel of communication for the civilian population to make complaints and inquiries from the security forces. In addition, observers should be allowed to visit the areas.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned about the 'disappearances' of Ponnuthurai Sinnathurai and Muhunthan. AI urges the Sri Lankan government to swiftly investigate their whereabouts, and requests that, if there are no recognisable criminal charges against them, they be immediately and unconditionally released. AI also asks that, once a HRTF office is established in the Jaffna peninsula, the Sri Lankan government press upon its security forces to give the officers of the HRTF office full cooperation.

Joseph Pararajasingham also wrote in the letter to President Chandrika Kumaratunga that 76 Tamils, mostly youths, were being harassed by police after being arrested by the army.

"The police have them in their custody for over three months, torture them and obtain confessions under duress," he said in the letter which was made available to journalists.

Pararajasingham said the youths had been taken to Anuradhapura, to be produced before a magistrate there "though there is a magistrate court functioning in Jaffna."

AI Condemns Killing of Civilians

Amnesty International in a statement said that "according to several independent sources, members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) deliberately killed 11 bus passengers, including four women and a two-year-old child, around 10.30am on 12 September at Arantalawa, Amparai district.

"Survivors interviewed by journalists and others visiting the area told how a man in civilian clothes, thought to be a member of the LTTE, signalled to the bus driver to stop. Then approximately 30 armed men in camouflage uniform approached the bus from both sides of the road and started shooting. A few armed men boarded the crowded bus and shot at the driver and passengers. At the time of writing, the bodies had not been identified by name, but it is believed that among those killed are two Muslim men; all others are members of the Sinhalese community.

"Amnesty International is once again concerned that civilians appear to have been deliberately and arbitrarily killed solely on the basis of their ethnicity, in direct violation of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. It presses upon the LTTE that it is an essential obligation under humanitarian law at all times to maintain the distinction between the civilian population and combatants.

"Amnesty International has repeatedly appealed to both the LTTE and to the Government of Sri Lanka to avoid deliberate and arbitrary killings in the context of the ongoing armed conflict in the north and east of the country.

"Since the resumption of the armed conflict in April 1995, the organization has documented several incidents of deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians attributed to the LTTE. They took place during attacks on villages in the east and bordering areas, as well as bombings in the capital, Colombo.

"In late July 1996, a spokesman for the LTTE denied that it was responsible for the deliberate killing of at least 70 civilians and injury to hundreds more when two bombs exploded on a commuter train at

Dehiwela, north of Colombo. The spokesman gave assurances that the organization does not target civilians. Since then, however, an alleged member of the LTTE has reportedly confessed to the police that he was responsible for placing the bombs, casting doubt on the spokesperson's statement.

"Amnesty International is appealing to the LTTE to call an immediate halt to the deliberate killings of civilians and other human rights abuses by its members and to declare a clear commitment to uphold human rights at all times."

2 Innocent Youths Killed by STF

Reliable evidence has emerged that the story put out by the Sri Lankan military and picked up by international news agencies that the two youths who were shot by the police on 15 August at Kalmunai in eastern Sri Lanka were LTTE suicide bombers dressed as school boys riding bicycles laden with explosives in an attempt to assassinate Shipping Minister and SLMC leader Mr. Mohammed Ashroff to be absolutely false.

There is evidence to believe that these two persons were killed for non-security reasons by personnel belonging to the Special Task Force (STF) which has historically acquired over the years a notoriety for making thousands of people simply "disappear".

The two young men who were killed on this day would appear to have given Rs 50,000 each to a so-called job agent in Kalmunai to obtain jobs for them in one of the Middle-Eastern countries. As the job agent could not keep his promise, the two young men have been pestering him obtain the jobs or return the money. The STF men were bribed by the job agent to "bump them off" to avoid having to return the money.

One of the persons killed was Nagarajah Thameshkumar who was employed at the time of his murder with the well-known NGO, the Sarvodaya Movement which operates in many parts of Sri Lanka.

In a letter addressed to the head of Sarvodaya, the father of Thameshkumar, Kanapathipillai Nagarajah who lives in Kalmunai states as follows:

"My son was born on 24.11.74... He sat for his GCE A'level 1993; from 1 October 1993 he worked as a Research Assistant at the Voluntary Centre at the Kalmunai/Pandidrappu Mahavidyalam. On 19.11.94 he was appointed to the post of Research Assistant by the Secretary to the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the North-East province. On 16.5.95 he received a letter from the Secretary of the North-East Provincial Council that his appointment to the post had been rescinded. After unsuccessful representations being made to the authorities to regain his ap-

pointment, he joined the Sammanthurai Technical College to follow the NCAT course, and at the time of his murder he was following the first year of this course. He also has been a member of the Sarvodaya Movement from 1.1.94. He recently went to the Kataragama temple and shaved his head in keeping with a vow he had taken. On his return from Kataragama, he decided that he would go abroad to earn some money and applied and obtained a passport for the purpose. In connection with his intention to go abroad he on his own set out on the morning of 15.8.96 on his bicycle No.2403351 to meet the Assistant Chief of Foreign Employment Opportunities. When he left, he was wearing a gold chain with a pendent and a wrist watch. After learning at about 10.30 am that the STF had taken our son into custody, my wife and I went to the Kalumani police station and when I enquired about my son, they denied any knowledge of my son. Thereafter, we learnt that our son was at the Kalmunai Support Hospital after being shot and when we went to the hospital we saw his dead body. I know very well that my son, N.Thameshkumar has never been connected with any terrorist organisations. In this connection I humbly ask you to whatever you can."

[Note by Editor: Will the "Tamil Times Reader" who wrote the letter dated 3 October from Australia supply his name and address so that we may communicate with him. The information will be kept in strict confidence]

Record Damages Award

The District Court of Colombo has awarded damages for defamation in a sum of £500,000 (40 million rupees) in favour of Mr. Ronnie Peiris who is businessman resident in the UK in the action he filed against Leader Publications Ltd, the publishers of the Sri Lankan Weekly, the Sunday Leader.

The action against the newspaper arose out of a news item titled "All the President's Friends" which appeared in the Sunday Leader on 5 February 1995 in which defamatory statements were made against Mr. Peiris. The article in question falsely alleged that Mr. Peiris was a debtor to Airlanka in the sum of Rs.7 million and had been afforded credit facilities by Airlanka totally disproportionate to the security provided and this afforded extremely favourable treatment not available to others, the imputation being that Mr. Peiris was afforded this favourable treatment because he was a friend of the President.

The Sunday Leader has now filed papers in court stating that the summons was not duly served on it and therefore the judgement delivered ex-parte should be vacated and a full hearing of the case should be listed.

Media Watch

Being a Tamil in Colombo....

The much respected veteran journalist, Lucien Rajakarunanayake, in his weekly column in the Sunday Leader (18.8.96) comments as follows as to the ordeal Manoranjan, a journalist, had to go through in Colombo:

"The Tamil journalist, Manoranjan, who writes for the Yukthiya (a Sinhala weekly), who campaigned hard for the election of the PA, and is so often heard with such great interest by the Sinhala people when he explains the reality behind the LTTE, and the crisis of the Tamil people, has had his home searched and combed several times by the Police and the Army.

He has gone through all the processes required of registering at the local Police station that a Tamil has to do. His mother is a paralysed victim of paranoia after the riots of 1983. Yet, he speaks against the LTTE and openly campaigns against it.

Two weeks ago, when he returned after addressing a PA workshop on Devolution at Aranayake, his home had been visited by the army looking for a Tiger suspect. They had threatened to break the door, when a good neighbour had said that the man had said that he was leaving for Kandy, and would return the next day. The army left leaving the stern message that he should report to the Police the next day.

When he returned, he went to the Police as required. He explained his position. This had been the umpteenth time that his home had been searched. All details were taken down. But, last week the army rained down on his home again, and ransacked the place. To whom can he now complain? Are complaints of any effect? What can happen if there is no understanding DIG or SSP at hand?

When such is the treatment given to Tamils who are open, declared and active opponents of the LTTE, what can other Tamils expect from the security forces. And what can they expect from the system of justice too. Should not a magistrate inquire as to what the suspicions about a person are, before committing a person to remand? Where are the principles of natural justice? If there is a lack of natural justice, and continued harassment is what is in store for Tamil opponents of the LTTE, what can other Tamil citizens expect?

Is there an unseen force active, determined to drive the Tamils into accepting the LTTE and the concept of a divided land or that of a continuously subservient minority? At least from the point of self-interest, does the Government or senior officers of the Police and other arms of governmental forces, not understand that the spread of this situation, can only help tarnish the good image of Sri Lanka built

abroad so hard by Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, in explaining the commitment to peace and communal goodwill of the President and the PA government?

Or are they deliberately trying to blacken the image of this country, and bring upon it the total criticism of Amnesty International and other organisations, who have begun to appreciate the human rights policies of this government?

I fear the latter, a more sinister hand is at work, and that again is a threat to democracy...."

"The Traitors"

"Pravada" is a monthly journal published in English and Sinhala in Sri Lanka and edited by two well known academics and committed human rights workers, Charles Abeysekera and Jayadeva Uyangoda. The Sinhala version is not necessarily a translation of the English one though some translated articles from one appear on the other on occasions.

The Sinhala version Pravada has recently published a series of articles trying to deconstruct Buddhist attitudes towards such issues as democracy, feminism and social organisation. It has taken as its arena both the doctrine as expounded in the Pali canonical texts as well as the institutionalised practice of the religion in contemporary Sri Lanka. The editors realised that these articles would be controversial and did expect debate, albeit on a level of intellectual discourse. But they were too optimistic. The August 96 issue of "Pravada" has this to say about "subsequent developments":

"However, subsequent developments have showed us that we underrated the degree of heat inherent in the current climate, exacerbated as it is by the ethnic conflict. These articles have been construed as a base attack on Buddhism and consequently on the Sinhala community;

in encouraging such attacks, the editors are playing the game of the Tamils fighting for a separate state and deserve to be called traitors. Once again, the over-determination that the ethnic conflict exerts over all other issues. The insanely irrational nature of Sinhala Buddhist ideology was also clearly on view.

"The political overtones of the debate were made all the more prominent by a resolution moved in the Western Provincial Council by the leader of the opposition and approved without a division by the Council. The resolution called for the banning of the journal and the expulsion of its two editors from all their positions. These arguments were supported by the contention that the journal was forum for attacks on Buddhism; bits and pieces from the articles, taken out of context and with no concern for their overall thrust, were used in the debate. The age-old connections between Buddhism and the Sri Lankan state were emphasised in the course of the debate, with the implication that the articles therefore also constituted an attack on the state.

"It must be said that some members of the council spoke in defence of the content of the articles and even of the right to free expression. But even they too were caught up in the hysteria of the debate and did not rise to oppose it.

"We bring this to the attention of our readers as an illustration of a mentality that stands against all efforts to modernise our society and to work out a political structure that accords with present realities."

While one can commend the editors of the "Pravada" for their courage in their effort to deconstruct established or reconstructed ideological myths, they no doubt would realise that there are others who seek to make similar efforts on the other side of the ethnic divide who are labelled "traitors" liable to penalties more severe than a mere denunciatory resolution of a Provincial Council.

Hope of Peace has Dimmed

With the government's peace plan virtually stalled by lack of cooperation from the opposition and a virtual stalemate on the military front, all hopes have dimmed in Sri Lanka for an early end to the country's 13-year civil war, analysts and politicians say in Colombo. "I am pessimistic," said Rohan Edrisinghe, a lecturer on law at Colombo University. "The only hope that we have now is the situation will get worse and the people will begin to realise that something hitherto unthinkable has got to be resorted to in order to reach a political solution," Edrisinghe said.

On the military front it has been a question of stalemate - the government forces winning one battle over the Tigers, and the Tigers winning the subsequent one resulting in heavy casualties on both sides.

At the end of August this year the army suffered its worst debacle when the Tigers slaughtered over 1400 soldiers in operation against a military base at Mullaitivu in north-eastern Sri Lanka.

Government forces after several days of the offensive that recommenced on 20 September captured the northern town of Kilinochchi where the LTTE had set up its headquarters after it evacuated from Jaffna in November last year.

Neelan Tiruchelvam of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Colombo and a Member of Parliament, said he saw no end in the near future to the current stalemate in the ethnic war. "I don't see any breakthrough in the military operation. Unfortunately war has its own dynamics. Each party to a war wants to

tilt the military balance in their favour. So it is an unending cycle," he said.

Tiruchelvam said a political solution was the only way to end the conflict, but politicians and diplomats said bickering by the ruling and opposition parties appeared set to scuttle the peace package proposed by President Chandrika Kumara-tunga in August 1995.

The package, offering to devolve wide-ranging powers to Tamils through a constitutional revision, had the aim of ending the 13-year civil war. The peace plan suggests turning Sri Lanka into a union of regions and making it a federal state in all but name. Kumaratunga's People's Alliance (PA) government has a one-seat majority in the 225-member parliament. Since any constitutional change requires a two-thirds majority, it needs support from the main opposition United Liberal Party (UNP), which holds 85 seats.

"It is impossible for the PA to get UNP backing for the package unless you dilute it to a useless level," said Dharmalingam Sithadthan, a Tamil member of parliament who leads the People's Liberation Organisation for Tamil Eelam. "Despite the soaring defence burden and inflation and suffering of the people from the war, PA and UNP are seeking petty politics in which national interest is lost," he said. "The outlook is so bleak that I don't see any way out."

Victor Ivan, editor of Ravaya newspaper, said the UNP was bent on foiling the peace package, which would help unseat the PA from power in the next elections. "They think the best thing to finish this government is to go against this package. The government will face a crisis without the package because minority Tamils and Muslims will be upset," he said.

UNP General Secretary Gamini

Atukorale said his party supported devolution but signalled opposition to a constitutional change to delete reference to Sri Lanka being a unitary state. "The principle of an indivisible Sri Lanka should be respected and we are against any form of federalism," Atukorale said.

Diplomats said the recent establishment of commissions to probe abuses under past governments made it easier for the UNP to refuse cooperation for the package, which is now before a parliamentary select committee.

Edrisinghe said the package, even if approved, would not meet the aspirations of Tamil politicians, let alone the LTTE. "There is nothing in the package to provide power sharing at the centre. If you are serious about devolving power to regions I think it is important that regions should have some political clout at the central legislature level," he said.

Sale of Stake in Telecom

Sri Lankan authorities are to sell a major stake in a state telecommunications monopoly as part of the country's ambitious privatisation programme.

"Advertisements are going out locally and internationally within a week, calling for a strategic partner to take up a 35 percent stake and management in Sri Lanka Telecom," said Rajan Asirwatham, Chairman of the Public Enterprise Reform Commission on 19 September.

Asirwatham, who is in charge of government privatisation plans, indirectly ruled out any sale to a local investor by saying the offer would be limited to "experienced telecommunications operators." He told reporters that reforming Telecom topped the list of needy reforms in Sri Lanka's creaking infrastructure and was absolutely essential for a country canvassing foreign investment to generate jobs.

"Without reforming Telecom, Sri Lanka will go into the 21st century as one of the very few countries which cannot provide telephones even on payment," he said.

Asirwatham said the sale of the 35 percent stake would be completed by the end of this year. Restructuring Sri Lanka Telecom matches up with the government's stated goal of reforming non-profitable and badly managed public enterprises. "Where a total or partial sell-off is not feasible, the government will try to end most monopolies by encouraging competition and reform others by injecting efficient management," Asirwatham said.

According to stock analysts in Colombo, Sri Lanka Telecom would be the most complex and largest privatisation the nation has embarked on. They speculated that a 35 percent stake and management of Sri Lanka Telecom could enrich state coffers by about 15 billion rupees (\$268 million). Sri Lanka Telecom's post-tax-profit in 1995 was 1.82 billion rupees and it employed 7,750 at the end of March this year.

Sri Lanka now has 226,200 direct telephone lines for a population of 18 million

people, with a waiting list for about another 300,000 lines, and analysts agree that the Telecom requires an infusion of large amount of capital to meet the country's needs.

The unionised labour force of Telecom is certain to view the sale of the 35 per cent stake as a prelude to wholesale privatisation, and therefore are likely to oppose the proposed reforms. However the government would seem to be confident that it could resolve any labour dispute through negotiations with trade unions.

Ariyaratne Wins Prestigious Prize

Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, the founder and leader of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka, received the prestigious Gandhi Peace Prize from the Government of India. In 1994 on the 125th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi the Government of India established an International Peace Award named Gandhi

Peace Award. The first award was given to Honourable Dr. Julius Nyerere, the former President of Tanzania.

H.D. Deve Gowda, the Prime Minister of India, in his letter dated 18 September to Dr. Ariyaratne said, "Our High Commissioner in Colombo has informed me about his talk with you on telephone in regard to the Gandhi Peace Prize."

"On the occasion of the 125th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi on 2 October, 1994, the Government of India instituted the Gandhi Peace Prize for Social, Economic and Political Transformation through Non-violence, with the intention of encouraging the promotion of Gandhian values around the world. Mahatma Gandhi's teachings offer an alternative to many of the apparently unresolvable problems that confront us. The

Prize is intended to honour a person who has worked selflessly for peace, non-violence and amelioration of human suffering, particularly of the less privileged sections of society, thereby, contributing towards social justice and harmony.

"The Jury for the Prize met under my chairmanship on 12 September, 1996. It is a particular pleasure for me to inform you that after careful consideration of all the nominations received from around the world, the Jury has recommended that the Gandhi prize for the year 1996 be conferred on you. The prize carries an Award of Rs. 10 million and a Citation.

"I would like formally to seek your consent to accepting the Prize, and to invite you to New Delhi for the presentation Ceremony. I look forward to an indication of your convenience, so that further arrangements can be made.

"It would be timely if, subject to your consent, the announcement of the Award can be made on Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary on 2nd October, 1996."

Immigration Network Busted

French authorities said that they have smashed a network which smuggled hundreds of illegal immigrants from Sri Lanka to France and Canada over the past eight years, according to a Reuter report datelined 9 October.

The Interior Ministry said the immigrants, paying a fee of 40,000 francs (\$8000) were being flown from Colombo to Kiev, then driven into France through Poland, Germany and Switzerland.

Police swoops in four Paris suburbs showed the immigrants were being housed clandestinely in poor sanitary conditions and given forged documents in order to apply for political asylum. The network's profits were being channelled back to Colombo.

Seventeen persons were being held in custody, among them 11 of the network's leaders and two illegal residents.

MAKING OF A CONSTITUTION AND BREATHING A NEW SPIRIT

By Rajan Hoole

A Constitution is no guarantee of a perfect society. Why the Indian and American Constitutions have an air of permanence. The answer has to do with universal principles, open-mindedness and a consensual approach.

The ethnic conflict is now at a point where optimistic military expectations have faded into another cycle of despondency. The military approach to the problem pursued from the 70's has consistently nurtured its mirror image, making the insurgency first appear larger than life and then making it so. The Tamils too have most tragically been staggered by the destructive potential that could be extracted from a small community through totalitarian control.

The country now faces two stark choices. To fight the Tigers it could, as one option, take chunks out of their book and militarise the whole polity. This, some among the more privileged have fumblingly advocated. It means sacrificing nearly everything that the voters wanted so clearly at the last elections. It means saying goodbye to human rights, the rule of law, equality, economic and social programmes aimed at the underprivileged, and the fight against corruption in its various forms.

When commentators try to blur the difference between the SLFP and the UNP, an important organisational difference is forgotten. The former still remains the party that had made a tremendous investment in the peace programme and the search for a political solution. Sections of its cadre are almost daily addressed in their hundreds by outsiders who are activists from peace groups, placing an emphasis on understanding the experience of the Tamils and a federal solution.

Military pressures would tend to weaken the section within the PA who advocate a political solution and drive the SLFP to reverse the present healthy development and instead trumpet the primordial siren sounds of race, nation and religion. That would be a great loss to the country while giving immense satisfaction to Tamil narrow-nationalists whose favourite line is that nothing good can come from the Sinhalese. They too have also ignored, as becomes them, the positive change in the southern polity, to push the

claim that the constitutional package is merely a deceptive means to prosecuting the war.

The alternative course that was being lost sight of when the military going appeared good, is the natural logical extension of the important step taken by the SLFP as a party organisation. This is to pursue democratisation to its logical conclusion. An important part of this is a whole new spirit towards the making of the new constitution.

The Present Impasse

The first draft of the new constitutional package released in August last year created high expectations because it gave the feeling of freshness that broke new ground. The subsequent modifications in the face of strong rearward action leading to the legal draft, the so called Choksy proposal and the play with words over the terms 'federal' and 'unitary', took away much of the credibility from the constitutional exercise. All the modifications seemed to be singly at the behest of those very interests that were primarily responsible for economic stagnation and the present conflict.

Examining the legal draft, Rohan Edirisinghe, observed Sunday Times (25 August) that its "accumulated inconsistencies extended even to the ungrammatical". He concludes by calling for a 'radical overhaul', 'a return to basic principles'... 'a new beginning'. To extend or paraphrase his conclusion, it needs an entirely new spirit.

The incongruities and inconsistencies in the legal draft only demonstrate that it has not succeeded in escaping from the history of manipulation by ruling interests that largely dictated constitution making in this country from the 1940's. The disenfranchisement of plantation labour soon after independence in 1948/49 under the first post-independence constitution, was not a sudden afterthought. This manipulative intention has sullied all subsequent constitutions - We are now on the third with numerous amend-

ments. Inconsistencies arise from the need to serve partisan interests while verbally subscribing to the rational and universal. These constitutions if not still-born, soon become dead documents, singularly failing to create a united nation.

If we are to launch on an alternative course to protracted conflict, we need to plan and lay down investments to forge a united nation and bring back alienated minorities into the mainstream. This means breathing a whole new spirit into constitution making and simultaneously revamping the administration to remove accumulated injustices.

When a country goes through an economic depression it is the job of economists to think carefully and recommend measures in areas such as infra structural investment education and skills, fiscal policy, liquidity and interest rates, so as to turn the economy around. There are no certainties. One has to monitor and respond as things go, calmly and thoughtfully making corrections if one is on the wrong track. A benign outcome may take anything from four to fourteen years. There is no reason to believe that there are quick solutions to the twenty year old ethnic conflict. All we could do is to start making the best possible investments that the sum of human experience and wisdom gives us. The constitution is one of them.

The Spirit of the Constitution

Why is it that the Indian and American constitutions have an air of permanence far unlike ours? An important part of the answer is to do with universal principles, open-mindedness and a consensual approach.

Universal Principles:

A constitution as we know well is no guarantee of a perfect society. We know that about half the Americans feel alienated enough, doubt their ability to bring about change and thus do not bother to vote. Despite grass-roots opposition the propensity of American ruling interest to warlike acts and to display their hi-tec destructive power on helpless people seems unstoppable. Yet the universal principles strongly articulated by the constitution have been an inspiration for succeeding generations to take corrective action, and have acted as an umbrella legitimising protest. This is a great strength. These principles have been the legacy of humanity for more than 2,500 years.

The equality of man is one such powerful principle. Even if the mak-

ers of the American constitution did not believe that African slaves were men, succeeding generations have used that principle to mobilise protest and bring about corrective measures with remarkable effect, which even included positive discrimination. Had that principle been hedged by preferential reference, even implicitly, to one group or the other, it would have been nullified and the constitution would have lacked either permanency or inspiration. There would have been no American nation.

Take now the Asoka Chakra that adorns India's flag as its national symbol. It embodies the spirit of India by immediately calling to mind the best in the common heritage of the sub-continent - the gift of Buddhism to her peoples. The Chakra symbolises the renunciation of violence and dedication to good works. How it inspired outsiders is recorded by H G Rawlinson quoting from the two well known Chinese traveller-scholars.

Fa Hian Spoke of Pataliputra under the Imperial Guptas about 405 AD: "The nobles and householders have founded hospitals within the city, to which the poor of all countries the destitute, crippled and diseased, may repair... The king inflicts no capital punishment, but merely fines offenders... The people of the country drink no intoxicants and kill no animals for food..."

The second Chinese traveller Hieun Tsang, wrote about his hero emperor Harsha who with his family had strong Buddhist leanings about 630 AD: "In all the highways of towns and villages throughout India he erected hospices, provided food and drink and stationed there food and medicines for travellers and poor persons round about, to be given without stint... at one time slaughter of animals was banned under the most drastic penalties."

Who in the sub-continent, of whose rich history we too are part, would hesitate to claim such a heritage for one's own? The idea of India as captured by the makers of the Indian constitution would inspire generations of Indians to come as part of one great nation. It paid Buddhism the greatest possible honour - made even greater by a secular constitution.

The one thing about which all of us are agreed about our own lion flag is that it is partisan. It is a totemic symbol from pre-historic having little, if any, foundation in historical scholarship. Its ideological associa-

tions based on myth have rather been stubbornly used to reinforce an oppressive and alienating power structure. The spirit behind it contributes nothing to unity.

The Rights of the Citizen

The spirit of the constitution in turn inspires laws and traditions that determine the liberty and quality of life of the ordinary citizen. These subtle workings are often little recognised. The American constitution made a significant departure as regards the rights of the ordinary citizen that are felt in many areas of life. One idea inspired by its spirit was that no one is above criticism. Under American law it is very difficult to pin libel on an individual journalist. One is allowed to publish what one believes to be the truth. Thus in American libel law it is not enough to prove that what was published is unsubstantiated, but one must further establish malicious intent.

The British law which we have followed is largely of feudal inspiration. The onus is on the journalist to prove the truth of what he has written or face staggering penalties. It reflects a power structure where the right to free expression is inordinately hedged in favour of the rich and powerful. The right to accountable governance is also correspondingly hedged. This is not an abstract idea as it also has long term effects on the health of the economy and on social peace.

Economy and Social Peace

Three very damaging financial scandals in Britain came to light rather too late.

These involved financier Robert Maxwell (1991), the collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (1992) and then of Barings Bank (1995). It has been rightly pointed out that in the US such doings would have been exposed by the press before the damage was irreparable. In Britain financial journalists who hit upon a story are placed under heavy pressure by threats of libel action.

The effects on the economy go considerably further. The reader would have begun to suspect that the current moves of economic deregulation need further structures of accountability and are certainly incompatible with libel laws of feudal inspirations. For example, although nuclear power generation in the US is in private hands, regulatory mechanisms are highly developed. The records and log books of nuclear plants are public property and every citizen has the right to in-

spect them on demand. [The same has not applied to dangerous and harmful experiments enjoying the cover of military secrecy.]

In Britain one gets a fair view of how the economy is harmed by power structures that strongly favour a particular class. The financial sector is dominated by old boys of English public schools, Oxford and Cambridge universities. British postwar economic policy had largely favoured the financial sector to the cost of the industrial - ie financial deregulation with high interest rates to control inflation. During the Thatcher years of Conservative rule (1979-90) the decline of industry became a rout with production falling by 25%.

Our constitutional process too has generally steered clear of larger issues and appears to get bogged down in arguments about symbols, ethnicity, sovereignty and unitarity. Behind the opposition to even the legal draft using these notions, there is a strong vested interest in keeping the structure of power intact. To the ruling interests the regions enjoying real power is an anathema. Only at one extreme is the issue about ethnicity.

Can we afford to perpetuate such an exercise of power that had ultimately resulted in two bloody rebellions in the south and a protracted war in the north-east? If the making of the new constitution is not approached in a fresh spirit, it threatens to become another exercise in appearing to give the Tamils something to chew on while the real structure of power is hedged in through contradictions. It is an illusion to think that the consequences for the country can be managed for any length of time by the use of force.

The making of a new constitution is primarily a political process through which a country matures. If the two major parties are responsible enough to see the stark reality in the country and agree on basic principles, the people would no doubt go along. For the UNP or other sections to oppose even the legal draft on the grounds that it goes too far for the people to accept would be utterly irresponsible and opportunistic.

The Tamils too need to discuss matters openly and give confidence to the others that they are responsible agents for change. Passivity on the other hand renders them victims of manipulation. If we cannot do better than the legal draft, it only brings out the sad political reality in the country. ●

On 8 October, the Government lifted the draconian censorship it had clamped down for more than six months on all military news from the northeast. The Deputy Minister for Defence, General Anurudha Ratwatte made the surprise announcement at the commencement of the monthly debate in Parliament on the extension of the island-wide emergency imposed by the PA since last year. The minister, in his opening speech, said that he had seen reports in the press that the UNP was prepared to visit the peninsula only if the censorship is lifted and invited the party to see for themselves the situation there.

"I have now lifted this censorship and I invite the opposition gentlemen to visit Jaffna and I hope they will accept it. If you fear to go alone, come with me. I will show you how Jaffna is now administered. You can then see the true picture and speak from your experience about the prevailing situation there and make a better contribution", he told the UNP.

The same day the Pooneryn base was removed and its troops were relocated at Kilinochchi. The lifting of the censorship helped papers for the first time in six months to report this and a bombing raid on LTTE's I-4 base in the Nedunkerni region without the ubiquitous 'censored' note mutilating their stories.

Naturally, there was general curiosity in Colombo to find out the reason why the Government decided at his particular juncture to do away with the censorship. Pressure from donor countries was considered to be one of the main reasons. Another was that the Government does not need censoring any longer because it is not planning to undertake major operations following the conclusion of Sath Jaya III which saw the recapture of Kilinochchi.

The fact, however, was that the PA had begun to really feel the heat in many quarters locally. It was in danger of completely antagonising the press, with which its relationship had not been on the best of terms even before the censorship was clamped down. The Sunday Leader, according to its editor, Mr Lasantha Wickramatunge, had even decided to take the extreme step of defying the censorship by not sending defence related arti-

cles to the Department of Information.

The purchase of armaments, ongoing or contemplated operations, deployment and recruitment of troops and the conduct of military officers and men could not be reported under the censorship rules.

The emergency regulations on censorship came under incessant fire from editors, defence correspondents (who had been the worst affected) and

countable to at least a section of the Parliament if not the public.

Commenting on the latest supplementary estimates on defence, amounting to 10.4 billion rupees (which raised the total defence expenditure to Rs 50 billion) the Island said - "The ways in which this colossal amount would be spent is a matter of serious concern to the public. Only those in the Ministry of Defence will

be privy to this defence expenditure. 'National security demands that the manner in which it is spent should not be divulged', We certainly agree that the kind of weaponry purchased should not be divulged, if the military feels that

such information would be advantageous to the enemy. Absolute secrecy can be advantageous but it also has detrimental effects too (sic... Government politicians apparently do not believe in the saying of a well known French statesman Talleyrand: 'War is much too serious a subject to be left to military men.'

While some do support the Government decision to impose censorship on armament purchases in the name of national security, in most democracies defence expenditure is subject to intensive scrutiny (sic) by Parliament. Defence expenditure is subject to Parliamentary control in Sri Lanka at least in theory.

But as has been the practice, questions on armament purchases will no be answered, national security being the excuse. The Government need not divulge highly confidential arms purchases on the floor of the Parliament but should adopt the practice of disclosing, when necessary, the information to a special Parliamentary committee."

The Island's suggestion seems to have been born of the general belief that the censorship was there to stay under the PA's rule. The concern expressed by the paper about the purchase of armaments was one shared by many belonging to almost all shades of the political spectrum, especially in the light of reports in the past about shady deals and colossal commissions in the purchase of armaments for the Sri Lankan security forces. The President cancelled an arms deal amounting to USD 72 million as soon as she came to power. It was alleged that this deal had not been

MEDIA FREEDOM AND CENSORSHIP

By D P Sivaram

columnists. Their angry arguments can be formulated as follows:

(a) The censorship was selective in that some papers, which in former times supported the PA, were apparently operating with impunity as far as the regulations were concerned. The censor was allowing these papers to publish stories on the war, which very well came under the purview of the regulations on account of their contents and thrust, while other mainstream papers were getting their copies faxed back from the censor's office with almost everything chopped, making the little that had escaped the blue pencil utter gibberish. A mainstream Sinhala paper, for instance, was warned by the censor recently for publishing a story which did not fall into the category described by the regulations.

(b) The Government's argument that this was being done to prevent vital information from falling into the hands of the LTTE is nonsense because the Tigers could get the same from the foreign media based in Sri Lanka to which the regulations did not apply. It was also pointed out that the scale of operations in the northern and eastern theatres was such that it was difficult to hide troop movements from the LTTE.

(c) In the past it was the alertness of the press which had exposed corruption in arms deals. The censorship was actually helping the corrupt elements in the defence establishment by protecting them from critical public scrutiny. However, the daily Island in an editorial (8.10.96) argued for a rational procedure for making the monies spent on defence purchases ac-

done according to standard procedures for the purchase of armaments.

The whole transaction was first questioned and exposed in the local press. This was possible, say the critics of the PA's media policy, because there was no censorship on military affairs at that time under the UNP.

Again, the fact of the matter was that the foreign press, which was not bound by the regulations, could reveal details about the purchase of arms by the military that, in turn could call into the hands of the LTTE.

All this, therefore, went to prove beyond doubt, argued opponents of the censorship and the PA, that the rationale for the censorship proffered by the Government was downright phoney. It was not, they said, national security concerns which compelled the PA to impose the regulations, but a desire to control and suppress the press. This was clear from the manner in which the censor wielded his authority to regularly cut from copies which were sent to him many matters of public interest to which the promulgated censorship rules had the slightest connection. The 'cuts' were patently intended to satisfy the whims and sensitivities of those in power.

"The censor was set up to hold the fig leaf on the bumbling military activities of the Deputy Minister for Defence" fumed a journalist! Whose articles have been chopped beyond recognition on many occasions by the censor.

Although the Government has lifted censorship on military news from the northeast, suspicions about its commitment to media freedom are strong among many journalists and academics.

They point to the manner in which the PA is waffling and dragging its feet on the report of the Committee set up in January 1995 to advise the Government on the reform of the laws affecting media freedom and freedom of expression. The Committee, comprising RKW Goonesekera (Chairman), Dr Shirani Bandaranayake, Rohan Edirisinghe, Victor Gunawardene, Lucien Rajakarunanayake, Dr Jayampathi Wickramaratne and Surya Wickremasinghe, was directed by the Government (by letter dated

5.1.1995) to:

(a) study all existing legislation and regulations affecting media freedom, freedom of expression and the public's right to information, with a view to identifying the areas which need to be rescinded, amended or reformed in order to ensure media freedom, freedom of expression and the public's right to information; and

(b) make recommendations as to the amendments and/or repeal of existing legislation as well as new legislation required to strengthen media freedom in general and to ensure freedom of expression and the public's right to information."

This committee submitted an interim report to the Minister of Media Tourism and Aviation Mr Dharmasiri Senanayake on 7 April 1995. A complete report was prepared and handed over this year on 27 May.

The following are some observations on censorship made in the report.

"Our Committee is perturbed that of the 48 years of post-independence governance in Sri Lanka a cumulative total of over 20 years has been under emergency rule, during which emergency regulations have seriously interfered with the right to freedom of expression and the allied rights of assembly and association. There have been several spells of press censorship under emergency regulations. Such censorship has at times been arbitrary, capricious or whimsical."

The report refers to instances where all editorial comments in newspapers were required to be submitted to the Competent Authority before publication. It points out that among matters censored thus were comments on the high cost of living, on the marketing problems of passion fruit growers, reference to an alleged police assault on two civilians in the north etc. The Committee also takes up the question of the imposing of a total ban on some publications under emergency, the most notable case being the banning of the Saturday Review, the English Language Weekly published in Jaffna in the 1980's.

The report devotes a section to the withholding of books or journals from abroad by the customs. It says "From time to time books or journals carrying articles which are not to the lik-

ing of some political or other pressure groups are held up by customs officials and are not released to the importer or the addressee. This is sometimes reported to be done on ministerial directives. We are concerned about the exercise of officials to withhold the release of books, journals and newspapers. We have been unable to ascertain the legal authority, if any, under which this is done. We find, in any event, that this power has been exercised unreasonably and arbitrarily... We recommend that the law on this be clarified..."

Here, however, the report fails to take cognisance of the fact there have been instances where some publications were released only after the pages containing the 'undesired' material were ripped off from each copy imported. Part of an interview with LTTE's international spokesman, Lawrence Thilakar in the Junior Vikatan, a popular weekly from Tamil Nadu, was 'chopped out' of that publication by the customs in this manner early this year.

In its recommendations, the Committee states, inter alia: "The Committee is perturbed by the fact that censorship is imposed by emergency measures without public announcement or explanation. The Committee therefore recommends that all emergency regulations which restrict freedom of expression assembly or association be published immediately in the Sinhala, Tamil and English press. They should be tabled in Parliament and lapse if not specifically approved by resolution within two weeks." "The Committee further recommends that the law and practice relating to censorship be kept strictly within the framework permitted by international norms, notably the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Sri Lanka is a party. Policy on censorship should also be guided by the Johannesburg Principles on National Security, Freedom of Expression and Access to Information referred to in our report."

As one of the Committee's members lamented recently at a seminar, the government now prefers to conveniently ignore the fact that it commissioned a report on the freedom of the media - an idea which, it is quite apparent today, seems to leave a bad taste in the PA's mouth. ●

WOMEN FOR PEACE ON ABUSE OF HISTORY AND 'RACIST ADVERTISEMENTS'

On 18 August The Lankadeepa carried an advertisement inciting the "brave sons of Dutugemunu's lineage" to join the navy.

The reference to Dutugemunu requires analysis since it invokes a vision of history in which Sri Lanka is the sacred place of Buddhism which must be protected from outsiders. It entails an imagined past in which all Sinhalese are Buddhist and the enemies who invade are Tamil speaking Hindus. Accounts in The Mahawamsa of the defeat of the Tamil king Elara by the Sinhala Buddhist King Dutugemunu in 161 BCE has become a potent symbolic resource in a particular construction of the past by Sinhala Buddhists. This story has been used to legitimise the use of violence to protect or further the cause of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism.

In the context of an advertisement recruiting young men to join the navy, it appears that the myth of Dutugemunu and the evoked memory of how he resolved the need to conquer and kill, is being used to justify killing in order to protect sacred space. The myth resolves the moral dilemma of using violence despite the fact that violence is incompatible with a religion whose doctrine emphasises non-violence.

War involves death and suffering. It also involves the creation of 'enemies' or 'others' whose pain and humanity must not be recognised since this would make killing or 'defence' morally troubling. The solution to such ethical dilemmas often involves invoking 'duty' and 'responsibility' as a greater goal. To Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists this involves protecting the sacred space of Buddhism. Killing and violence for the sake or religion becomes justified through a particular ideological construction of the past.

What we need to remember is that there are many versions of history. In fact, the irony, as Gananath Obeyesekere has commented, is that The Mahawamsa itself records that Dutugemunu remained troubled by his killings: "great that it was (he) knew no joy, remembering that thereby was

wrought the destruction of millions of beings." [Mahawamsa 1912 XXV, pp.101-103].

We should also remember that there existed many other Buddhist texts before the translation of the Mahawamsa in the nineteenth century. These texts were multi-cultural in nature, aimed at a cosmopolitan Buddhist audience, unlike The Mahawamsa which was only written in Pali. One example is the book of jataka tales which was popular as a medium for transmitting ideas about Buddhism. These stories tend to deal with the self-sacrifice of the Buddha for the welfare of others and it would be difficult to imagine a story condoning the use of violence. It is only in the late nineteenth century, with the rise of a new educated elite and the institutionalisation of the Buddhist religion that the use of The Mahawamsa and the deployment of the Dutugemunu myth by Anagarika Dharmapala resurfaces.

What we must also remember is that in this historical period Buddhist nationalism was asserted in the wake of British imperialism. At this historical moment the appeal of Sri Lanka as a historic centre of Theravada Buddhism was something to take pride in. It must also be noted that Dharmapala himself used the Dutugemunu myth to inspire nationalism at a time of British rule and never used the myth to incite hatred of Tamils.

The fact that the state is now using Dutugemunu as a hero to incite young men to war is deeply disturbing. Particularly when it seems that the people from whom Buddhism must be protected are the Tamils. At least in the chronicles, Dutugemunu had a troubled conscience. It seems that here the state is resurrecting a less human Dutugemunu, one for whom war is without drawbacks.

The use of the Mahawamsa by the state indicates an acceptance of a politicised religion. This is a far cry from the humane world of the jataka tales in which the inter-relatedness of people is stressed. Let us hope that popular traditions of story-telling are not displaced by an ethno-nationalism which only allows for one construc-

tion of the past. The jataka tales remind us of the futility of violence which tends to breed more violence. What is forgotten in the rallying cry to protect the sacred space of Buddhism is that historically Sri Lanka has been multicultural. Hindu deities have been and are present in Buddhist shrines. People from different communities have inter-married and in many areas people live in ethnically mixed areas.

The poignant destruction of life which is inevitable in a military conflict can only be aggravated by the misuse of history, which creates borders between communities who have been able to share space. The LTTE and the movement for Eelam may also deploy myths and symbolic resources in their attempts to create ethnic enmity.

Vengeance however is futile. Although the government is committed to a military solution it is deeply troubling to see the use of symbolic resources such as the Dutugemunu myth in recruitment advertisements. Political identities, have tended to be based on ethnicity which has the problem of majoritarianism. It appears that the state can create different kinds of citizens, the 'sons of the soil' who must die for their country, 'nurturing mothers' who must care for the maimed. It can also make divisions so that some groups are sons of the soil whilst others are outsiders. Yet citizens are not constructs of the state; they are human beings located in communities, not in fantasy space.

What is interesting is to recognise that the state wears many masks. The English language advertisement which appeared in the Sunday Observer makes no reference to Dutugemunu. The advertisement does glorify war, asking young men to show their true guts. Yet courage is about tackling the hard problem of breaking down barriers.

What the state has to avoid is returning to an imagined past when ought to be dealing with the present. If the government is committed to peace it must not resort to a discourse of 'us' and 'them' but be clear about its commitment to multiculturalism, a reality which has historic and contemporary meaning. Women For Peace condemn the use of racist advertisements and ask the government to renew its commitment to multiculturalism.

The PA Government was elected to power in 1994 on a wave of revulsion at what had occurred during the period of the "Terror" as it is now known. On the road to Hakmana, passing Matara, the Ven Dr Pallekande Ratanasara pointed to a house hidden by trees in the distance. "My cousin was killed there," he said. "He was tortured before he died, he was nailed."

The people of the south, the heartland of so-called Sinhala nationalism to whom the call to arms is now being addressed in many ways, including sophisticated advertising campaigns, have lived in the midst of insurrection and counter-insurgency operations.

The experience of living through the years of the JVP struggle, the long efforts of awareness building on the part of the left-orientated political parties and the Buddhist ethos of universality that lays down the precept that "All fear death, considering others with oneself, neither kill nor cause to kill," may therefore have more weight than abstract political concepts such as sovereignty and central rule, so dear to armchair generals of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict.

Ironically, most of the opposition to the government's devolution package, on both sides of the ethnic divide, comes from the most privileged sectors of society. These are the political, military, religious and intellectual elites ensconced in comfortable situations in the urban centres both in Sri Lanka and abroad. Protecting the "national interest" that also gives them economic affluence and social influence warrants, in their minds, even the destruction of tens of thousands of lives.

Lower down the social and economic pecking order in the rural countryside, however, the opinion is considerably different. Most people in the south did not want the JVP liquidated in a military solution, said the Ven Ratanasara, a PhD holder from Russia and a senior monk in the Amara-pura Nikaya which is more representative of society as it is open to all sections. They wanted a political solution with negotiations taking place between the government and the JVP, he added. During the confrontation it became apparent that there were two main reasons for this which also illuminates the difficulty the Government faces in trying to separate the LTTE from the Tamil people.

THE JVP, LTTE AND RURAL PERCEPTIONS

By Jehan Perera

The first was that those who joined the JVP in such large numbers were the sons and daughters of the people themselves. Therefore, a clear distinction could not be drawn between the JVP and the people. Second, in those areas in which the JVP was strong, a certain discipline was imposed in which petty criminals, drug dealers and rapists were severely dealt with. The streets became safe, even at night, for ordinary people without party political interests to get about with their daily lives.

The destination of the Ven Ratanasara and other members of the group was a meeting organised by the Ven Kalupahane Piyaratana, Chief incumbent of the Kambiliyapola Purana Viharaya. At this tranquil temple, nestled by paddy fields on the one side and a school on the other, the mood of the people was decidedly not militaristic. In fact, the theme of the meeting, most appropriate for a Buddhist temple was "What is your responsibility in restoring peace?"

Faced with the exigencies of wielding state power, the mainstream Christian churches developed the concept of a "just war" several centuries ago. This concept was taken further by so-called liberation theologians in the '960's to justify violent revolt against manifestly oppressive social systems. Other religions too, such as Islam with its concept of "Jihad" and Hinduism with its own concept of a warrior's "dharma" illustrated in the Bhagawad Gita, also justify the use of violence in certain circumstances.

Buddhism, on the other hand, is different because it has never tried to justify violence. A monk of the area, the Ven Gatamanne Dhammalankara said Buddhist monks cannot claim to protect only a race but the land which belonged to all the people living on it. He added that the monks were the protectors of the Buddha's teachings and so they cannot preach the Dhamma on the one hand, and urge the young men to go to the battlefield on the other hand; instead they should cultivate "maithiri" to enable the antagonists to lay down arms instead of raising them against one another.

There was no angry reaction from the large gathering of people. On the

contrary, there were several interventions that were quite firm on the necessity for a negotiated political settlement. The breakthroughs to peace in the Philippines and Chechnya were referred to. Apparently the SLBC had carried reports on the developments in those countries on its "Vishva Shrivani" programme.

However, a debate began when one of the monks present said that the LTTE would not be amenable to a political settlement short of Tamil Eelam and that, therefore the military option was necessary. He also said that while the Government's devolution package may be a reasonable one, the people would not agree to negotiations again with the LTTE. The question at the meeting then became: What do the people really want?

When the peace process broke down in April 1995, what had seemed impossible just a few months earlier came true. Full scale fighting started to take place tragically erasing President Chandrika Kumaratunga's mandate for peace that had so recently been won with such a convincing majority. The primary campaign promise of Mrs Kumaratunga, that had been bitterly attacked by the UNP at that time, was to acknowledge Tamil grievances due to the war and to restore conditions of peace for all.

Similarly in the North it is well documented that the Government's peace negotiators were given a huge public welcome when they landed in their helicopter for the first round of peace talks.

In other words, people in both the North and South clearly expressed their rejection of any continuation of the war as a way of obtaining their rights and whatever else they wanted.

It is therefore easy to surmise that the increasingly brutal war that is being fought out today, with several hundreds dying on some days, is one that was categorically rejected by the great majority of people as recently as a little over a year ago. Then, the question is whether the war that is being fought today is one that has the approval of the people. Is it that the people have changed their minds, or is the war being fought today is one that

(Continued on next page)

The debate on devolution of power in Sri Lanka in recent months has been plagued by various myths and misconceptions about a number of constitutional concepts and principles. These need to be clarified.

The main area of confusion surrounds the meaning of the terms unitary and federal. The defenders of the Legal Draft on Devolution often make the point that it is difficult to define these two terms. While this may be true it is possible to define the essence of these terms.

The opponents of the Legal Draft base their arguments on the fact that merely because the word unitary is deleted from the Constitution, a federal form of government is introduced. This is a false assumption. The Legal Draft on Devolution does not introduce a federal form of government.

The essence of a Unitary Form of Government

A unitary form of government is one in which all legislative and executive authority is vested in a single legislature and a single executive. It has also been described as one in which "the habitual exercise of supreme legislative authority is carried out by one central power".

The single, central law making authority may if it so desires, delegate powers to subsidiary, subordinate bodies. If this is done it is done from the plenitude of its own powers.

The Essence of a Federal Form of Government

"A system for decision making is federalist if it is an entity composed

UNITARY Vs FEDERAL

By Rohan Edirisinha
(Faculty of Law, University of Colombo)

of territorially defined groups, each of which enjoys relatively high autonomy and which together, participate in an ordered and permanent way in the formation of the central entity's will".

Max Frenkel's definition in Federal Theory, highlights the importance of several key features of a federal form of government autonomy; a division of powers between the centre and provincial/regional representation at the centre.

There are several characteristics which can be identified as the basic features of a federal form of government. Ronald Watts, Professor of Politics at Queen's University, Canada, has surveyed several scholarly writings on Federalism and identified the following attributes as the basic features of a federal form of government. Ronald Watts, Professor of Politics at Queen's University, Canada, has surveyed several scholarly writings on Federalism and identified the following attributes as the basic features of Federalism:

1. Two orders of government each acting directly on their citizens, a formal distribution of legislative and executive authority and allocation of revenue resources between the two orders of government, including some areas of autonomy for each order; in short, a clear cut division of powers;

2. Provision for the representation of regional views within the federal (central) policy making institutions; this could be in the form of provinces/regions electing a certain number of members to a second chamber of Parliament.

3. A written supreme constitution not unilaterally amendable and requiring the consent of all or a majority of the constituent units; since a federal constitution is deemed to be a compact or covenant between the centre and the regions/provinces, amendments require the consent of both.

4. An umpire to rule on disputes between the centre and the provinces/regions; the umpire is invariably the judiciary.

5. Processes to facilitate relations between the centre and the provinces/regions where responsibilities are shared:

(Ronald I Watts, Contemporary Views on Federalism).

These five essential features of a federal form of government ensure that there is substantial devolution of powers to provincial/regional units and that such devolved power cannot be undermined or unilaterally reduced or abolished.

The way to overcome the glaring deficiencies in the present Provincial Council system is to introduce a scheme of devolution of power which includes the five features described above as the essence of Federalism.

After the failure of the Thirteenth Amendment, it is totally unreasonable to expect the minority parties to accept a system of devolution given to devolved units by Parliament and not by the Constitution, a system of devolution that can be Unilaterally withdrawn by a Parliament which does not even include a second chamber to represent regional concerns.

Those who want the Constitution to retain the unitary label must realise the practical implications of what they advocate.

They should also remember that the Unity of the country was perhaps best protected when the Constitution did not expressly provide for a unitary form of government and the paradoxically the seeds for a separatist

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has the approval of the people. Is it that the people have changed their minds, or is the war being fought because small coteries with power on either side of the ethnic divide want it? His is a difficult question to answer, because short of a referendum, one can never know for sure.

At Hakmana the organisers of the meeting put the question to the people present at the temple.

There was no opposition to the notion that renewed efforts should be made to end the war through negotiations with the LTTE. Even the monk who had raised the original objection on behalf of the people as he saw it now agreed to go along with the consensus.

The people at that meeting in the

premises of the Kambiliyapola Purana Viharaya had expressed their view, and it was for peace through negotiations rather than for peace through war as the government has been claiming is possible though with hardly any success to show for it.

It seems that rural people from whose ranks rebel movements tap their greatest numbers of recruits are more aware of the difficulties of suppressing such insurgencies and of separating the people from the rebels. Therefore, it is possible that if similar meetings are held elsewhere in rural Sri Lanka, both in the North and South they will reveal that the major block to peace is at the upper levels of the power pyramid, and not at the lower levels where the vast majority of people are located. ●

tist movement were sown soon after the introduction of the 1972 Constitution which expressly declared that Sri Lanka is a unitary state.

The Myth About the Legal Draft

But there is another important lesson to be learned from the five basic features of Federalism. The Government's proposed Legal Draft, though it deletes the commitment to Sri Lanka being a unitary state, does not introduce a federal form of government.

With the possible exception of the first feature, not one of the essential features have been introduced in the legal draft.

Since the Constitution is not supreme and there is no judicial review of legislation, the umpire's role is seriously circumscribed. There are no provisions for regional representation at the centre. The constitution, including the entire scheme of devolution, can be changed by Parliament acting unilaterally.

Even the new South African Constitution of May 1996, which does not introduce a federal form of government has more federal features than the Legal Draft. The Constitution does not refer to either of the labels. Federal or Unitary. It does provide, however, for a clear division of powers between the centre and the provinces.

The supremacy of the Constitution is unequivocally recognised as a basic value of the document. All law and conduct inconsistent with it is void. The principle of Co-operative Government is recognised in the Constitution and several mechanisms to facilitate such co-operation have been introduced. Provinces have the power to adopt their own Provincial Constitutions as well.

Provincial representation at the centre is guaranteed by a National Council of Provinces which provides for the 9 provinces to be represented in the bi-cameral central Parliament, and for the provinces to be consulted before constitutional amendments are introduced. The National Council of Provinces consists of 10 member delegations from each of the 9 provinces led by the Provincial Premier (Chief Minister).

Each 10 member delegation consists of 6 permanent delegates nominated by the political parties in the relevant provincial legislature and 4 floating delegates who shall be selected by the provincial legislature depending on the subject/legislation

under consideration in the National Council of Provinces.

Each provincial delegation is entitled to one vote. Therefore the 10 member delegation is entitled to one vote. Therefore the 10 member delegation will have to reach a consensus on any issue in the Council.

The Myth About Establishing Federalism

Another myth about federalism, which Mr Batty Weerakoon in his writings both in flavour of and against the legal draft, has helped popularise, is that a federal form of government is always established by previously independent or sovereign states coming together to constitute a new state.

Constitutional scholars recognise that there are two methods by which a federal form of government may be established. The more common method known as Integrative Federalism is where previously independent states integrate to form a new political entity.

The second method known as Devolutionary Federalism is where a country with a previously unitary form of government opts to change to a federal system. As Patrick Peelers of the University of Leuven, Belgium, has explained.

Integrative Federalism refers to a constitutional order that strives at unity in diversity among previously independent or confederally related component entities.

Devolutionary Federalism, on the contrary, refers to a constitutional order that redistributes the powers of a previously unitary state among its component entities; these entities obtain an autonomous status within their fields of responsibility. The principal goal is to organise diversity within unity. (**Patrick Peeters, Federalism: A Comparative Perspective - Belgium transforms from a Unitary to a Federal State**).

Belgium, Spain and Nigeria are examples of countries which have adopted Devolutionary Federalism and moved from unitary to federal forms of government. The South African Constitution of 1996, though not federal, has moved in that direction too.

The fundamental flaw in Barry Weerakoon's argument is that he assumes erroneously that a federal state can only be created through Integrative Federalism.

The five features of federalism out-

lined above make it clear that the definition of federalism has little to do with how a form of government was introduced, but more with the relationship between the centre and the provinces. The Batty Weerakoon thesis unfortunately supports those opponents of devolution who argue that a federal form of government necessarily pre-supposes a division of the country.

The myth that a federal form of government can only be introduced when previously independent states decide to merge, coupled with the provision that Sri Lanka shall be a Union of Regions has unfortunately created the impression that under the Legal Draft, Sri Lanka will be divided into quasi-independent regions which will thereafter enter into a federal arrangement.

There is therefore an implicit division of the country or at least an implied recognition of independent regions. Therefore the phrase "union of regions" has created as many problems as the term "federal" might have done.

From the discussion above it is clear that:

(a) A State with a unitary form of government can through the introduction of devolution of power change to a state with a federal form of government.

(b) Though the legal draft abandons the label, "unitary", it does not introduce a federal form of government as a number of basic federal features have not been incorporated in the document.

The Myth about Labels

Another myth promoted by the opponents of the Legal Draft is that a Constitution must bear either the label "unitary" or "federal" and that most countries bear the unitary label. This is completely false. Many countries which have unitary and federal forms of government do not refer to these words in their constitutions. Sri Lanka did not have either label until 1972.

The following countries do not use either label: South Africa, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, Japan, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Norway, Spain, India, Nepal, the United States of America.

The Indonesian Constitution con-

(Continued on next page)

Q: When you were elected to office in August 1994, you promised to resolve the ethnic conflict. You negotiated with the Tigers and, after they broke the cease-fire in April 1995, began what you called a war for peace - a military effort to corner the LTTE and a political effort to address the problems of the Tamil people. There is a widespread feeling today that the war has come to a stalemate once again following the setback at Mullativu, when one of the largest camps was overrun by the Tigers, and the halt to military operations at Kilinochchi?

A: When one is at war one does not win all the battles, even though one may win the war at the end. Especially when one is at war against a terrorist-guerrilla organisation like the LTTE, one cannot expect the results you have in a traditional war. Even in a traditional war not all battles are won, even if one wins the war in the end.

As far as the military part of the

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tains a provision that the "state shall be unitarian".

Australia, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Pakistan, Russia and Malaysia have provisions in their constitutions which refer to the words "federal" or "federation".

It is clear, therefore, that labels are not necessary.

The need for a new Initiative

A new initiative to break the stalemate in the Parliamentary Select Committee is needed. A fresh approach breaking off the shackles of the language, structure and legalistic orientation of both the 1972 and 1978 Constitutions should be adopted. These two Constitutions were both fundamentally flawed, failed to promote values and principles and fell short of basic principles of constitutionalism.

Sri Lanka should be ashamed of both these documents.

As a start, Article 1 of the Legal Draft should be replaced with the following which is influenced considerably by Article 1 of the new South African Constitution:

The Republic of Sri Lanka is one, united and sovereign democratic state founded on the following values:

(a) Human dignity, equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms;

(b) The Supremacy of the Constitution and the Rule of Law;

CHANDRIKA WILLING FOR THIRD PARTY MEDIATION

Interview with Frontline
by Ram Manikkalingam

campaign is concerned we have had very good successes. For the first time since the war began we have been able to bring under the control of the Government the most important and the largest part of the Northern Province, including Jaffna City. So about 60-70 per cent of the population of the Northern Province is also in government-controlled areas. We achieved this victory only seven months after military operations commenced. The major setback is Mullaitivu and we have advanced a certain amount towards Kilinochchi.

Q: What was the reason for the Mullaitivu debacle? The military did

(c) Universal adult suffrage and a multi-party system of democratic government to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness;

(d) Co-operative Government in which the national regional and local spheres of government are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated;

Neither the label "unitary" nor "federal" should be used. The phrase "union of regions" should be abandoned as well. The division of powers between the centre and the regions should be spelled out in two lists broadly similar to the lists contained in the Legal Draft.

Provisions to enshrine the principle of the Supremacy of the Constitution, to introduce a Senate or National Council or Regions to provide for a regional voice at the centre, and mechanisms to facilitate national/regional collaboration in important areas such as the Environment, should also be incorporated.

A provision to require Regional Councils to participate in the constitution amendment process must also be introduced. The State should treat all religions equally.

Perhaps then Sri Lanka's third attempt at drafting its own Constitution, will result in the introduction of substantial devolution of power, a united Sri Lanka in which all persons are equal, and a Constitution that commands the respect and obedience of all Sri Lankans. ●

not realise that the Tigers have the capacity to overrun a major camp?

A: This camp had to be attacked some time by the Tigers because it was an isolated camp in the middle of a vast area of Tiger (controlled) land. Especially after the taking of Jaffna District (by the Sri Lankan Army) all the LTTE cadres had to come down. The LTTE was heavily concentrated in that area. This area is thick with jungle and Prabhakaran hide outs here whenever he is in danger. They have jungle hideouts and underground hideouts and underground hideouts. This camp was the only little island in a whole sea of LTTE controlled land. So it is very obvious that it was at risk at that time.

Q: If it was obviously at risk, why wasn't the camp withdrawn at that time?

A: There was a military decision not to withdraw it. And for the reasons explained by the Deputy Defence Minister (Anuruddha Ratwatte) in Parliament, it could not be withdrawn at that time. I would like to add with regard to Mullaitivu that we took the maximum possible precautions we could take, given the situation and the limited resources we had in place there.

Q: In a recent speech you gave a deadline for the defeat of the LTTE and the resolution of this conflict, namely, the end of 1997. Now the LTTE is a strong guerrilla organisation with serious conventional capability, and guerrilla organisations are very hard to defeat. The Irish Republican Army exists after more than 70 years of British efforts to stamp it out. The Punjab conflict continues; so does the conflict in Kashmir. If you take the Sri Lankan conflict, President Jayewardene gave a deadline, vowing to end the conflict by December 1978. In September 1990, President Premadasa announced the defeat of the LTTE after the Eastern Province operations. Your own Deputy Minister of Defence gave a deadline - (the Sinhala/Tamil) New Year - we are not sure whether it was 1996 or 1997 to

defeat the Tigers. Now you have extended this deadline to the end of 1997. All of this suggests that giving deadlines is not particularly wise. Do you actually believe that the Tigers can be defeated and this problem resolved by the end of 1997?

A: You see, I did not give a deadline. I just told the people that we intend to settle the major part of the war. Those are the kinds of words I used in Sinhalese. I am well aware that a guerrilla type of war cannot be ended just like that. What I meant was and what I still reiterate is what we believe we can come to the end of the serious part of fighting and probably take over the main population centres today held by the Tigers. So what I said was the major part of the military operations as such would come to some kind of a settlement, after which we would have access to almost all the citizens - all the normal people - and make a political settlement with them.

This does not mean that we eliminate (the Tigers). The Tigers will go into the jungles and engage in various types of minor attacks, as has happened in Malaysia and other countries for many years. I believe we can settle the major issue and implement, as far as the Tamil people are concerned... begin to implement the political solution in one form or another.

Q: In order to implement a political solution, the political proposals and constitutional reform provisions for devolution need to be passed by Parliament. How do you think that will be done and when will it be done?

A: I cannot tell you the details of how and when, but we intend to have a very definite solution by the end of next year. Simply because we do not believe that the provisions of a constitution, which we have always maintained was immoral and wrongly imposed upon us with 16 amendments, should be allowed to prevent the majority will of the people from being implemented. So if the constitutional provisions do not permit that, I think we can find ways and means of getting round those constitutional provisions. This is what democracy is.

Q: You intend looking at extra constitutional means or extra parliamentary means to resolve the political aspects of the conflict?

A: No, it would not be extra-parliamentary means. It would be democratic means.

Q: Could you clarify that?

A: No, not for the moment.

Q: You need the support of the United National Party to get these proposals through Parliament. If the UNP does not support you, then your choices are limited. You can either hold a consultative referendum to show that you have support among the people for these proposals, or you can dissolve Parliament and hold general elections. Which one of these do you plan to do?

A: These are details I would not like to talk about now. The Government has to take decisions. All I would like to tell you is that we are working under a Constitution with a democratic guise that was very undemocratically imposed upon the people. We know what the referendum (to extend the UNP's rule in 1983) was about. We know some of the provisions in the Constitution which are very undemocratic. This is what we had been saying when in the Opposition for a long time. And this is why we are earnestly trying to amend the Constitution, not only vis-a-vis the ethnic problem but also vis-a-vis everything else, including the executive presidency.

Q: Isn't the stability of your Government enhanced by the executive presidency, one of the features that its considered undemocratic?

A: Yes, but if some of the other undemocratic provision of the Constitution were not there, then we would not need the executive presidency. For example, with the number of votes we got we would have had an overwhelming majority in Parliament if we had the normal method of voting. Then we would not have needed an executive presidency to stabilise the situation.

Q: About the parliamentary select committee process for constitutional reform, do you think there is still a possibility that the UNP might come round?

A: That is the imminent problem.

Q: You are looking for other options at this point. Have you given up hope of getting the support of the UNP?

A: No, I have not given up hope. Not at all. But as a responsible government we have to be prepared for the ultimate. While we continue to discuss with the UNP at various levels and see how we could come to a con-

sensus... One thought I would like to say is that the UNP has not been responsible in this issue. In the Select Committee or in their informal private discussions with us, they have not put forward any positive proposals to take this forward. They have not committed themselves on any of the key clauses in the devolution proposals. We believe that still we have to go on talking to them and we will go on talking to them.

Q: But for the first time in Sri Lanka's history an Opposition has not opposed the devolution proposals presented by a government in power to resolve the ethnic conflict. Traditionally the Opposition has always been fairly chauvinistic and opposed such proposals and taken out demonstrations on the streets. In 1957 the then Opposition leader, J R Jayewardene, opposed the pact (between the Federal Party and Prime Minister S W R D Bandaranaike); in 1965 the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the Left parties opposed the UNP's devolution proposals; and in 1987 the SLFP opposed the Provincial Council's scheme. Today the UNP has not actually mobilised opposition to the proposals...

A: Yes, that is a very positive sign. But I also believe it is a historic development which they could not have avoided. We are now at a different crossroads in the history of our country. Previously a majority of the majority community - a majority of the Sinhala community - was very definitely not for devolution. But today, for various reasons not the least of which is the fact that our Government had the courage, at the time of elections and thereafter, to constantly reiterate and explain to the people the need for a political solution - a majority of the Sinhala people do accept that devolution is the solution.

Secondly, the minorities for the first time moved away from the UNP and voted for the PA Government. This was an important red signal to the UNP that they should not conduct themselves any more in a manner that the 'other' Opposition - the UNP and the SLFP - did previously. So I think it was also a historic development that forced them into that situation.

Q: Going back to the peace process your Government is not the only one to have talked to the LTTE. There is a history of failed attempts at nego-

tations - Thimphu, Bangalore, the Indo-Lanka Agreement, the Premadasa-Prabhakaran talks and the talks between the LTTE and your Government. If you were to point to one single factor as the main reason for the collapse of all these talks and the failure to reach a negotiated settlement, what would that factor be?

A: If you had asked me this question before I came into government, I would have had all kinds of theoretical explanations... humanistic explanations. But now having bathed in it up to the neck, as it were, in the effort at negotiating with the LTTE. I can very bluntly say that it is very clear that the LTTE leadership does not believe seriously in negotiated settlements. Even before I came to power, I was very much involved in this process of promoting negotiations with the LTTE. Having personally attended to the whole process. It is very clear that the LTTE was never ever bona fide.

Q: There are some observers who suggest that one element absent from all of these previous negotiations, except may be from the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, was the role of a third party. And certainly the role of a neutral third party has always been absent because India played the role of a principal mediator by pushing both sides to come to an agreement. Would you be open at any point to the possibility of a neutral third party mediating this conflict in the near future?

A: Yes, I have always said yes. If the conditions are correct, quite definitely. We tried to persuade the LTTE to agree to that in the past. I requested them to name people. They did not. The Government named a very neutral person from a very neutral country. They refused.

Q: What do you see as the conditions necessary for such a neutral mediation?

A: First and foremost, we must be convinced that the LTTE would want to go to the end of a discussion and not use the negotiations process to strengthen themselves and hit back again, as they have done over and over again.

Q: What do you need to convince yourselves that the LTTE will negotiate?

A: I can't tell you now per se one, two, three, four... but it would depend on the given situation. We also now

insist that they have to lay down arms before we start negotiating with them. But of course, the third party making contact and beginning discussions can happen even without that, if certain other conditions are fulfilled.

Q: If tomorrow the LTTE leader, Prabhakaran, were to state publicly that he would like to contact the Government or engage in some talks with the Government through a neutral third party that is acceptable to both sides, how would your Government react?

A: If the LTTE say they are willing...

Q: Yes?

A: Well, we have to consider that. As a matter of principle, as I told you, we would be happy to do that. But it depends on who it is. There are a lot of people who have been offering for some time, lots of people - peace NGO's, which cannot live without getting involved in peace process, various individuals, and some countries also. We will have to look at the ability of such people and then decide.

Q: Your Government has just completed two years in office. You became Prime Minister in August 1994 and President in November 1994. What would you consider your greatest success in the last two years in office?

A: I would say our greatest success is that we have actually brought about a silent revolution in this country. We happen to be one of the few governments to have so radically transformed a country from a situation of quasi-dictatorship to total democracy, without shedding one drop of blood. Normally this kind of transformation in our century has been done either through a people's revolution - a socialist revolution or something. We are probably one of the very few governments that achieved this through the ballot. And we have been able to stabilise democracy and human freedom democratically.

Some people seem to think that our commitment to democracy is a weakness. I do not believe it is. I believe that this is our greatest victory - that we will allow our enemies to tell the worst possible lies about us and still only deal with them democratically and in no other way.

I would say that another related

achievement that we can be proud of is that we have been able to convince, for the first time, all the people - the majority of all the communities living in this country - that a political solution is the only way out of the ethnic problem. The strength of this achievement is that we have been able to maintain our commitment to a negotiated settlement and to peace, and to keep the people still with us on that score, while we were compelled to go to war in the last 16 months - much against our own will.

It was not done with the snap of a finger. We have done much work through various programmes - the Sudu Nelum Programme and other programmes to convince the people that the only way out is peace through political negotiations and political settlement. So these are our two greatest achievements. But we still have many more battles to win. The next main battle is the economic one, which we have begun to wage. We have to win that one as well.

Q: There is strong criticism of the Government with regard to the economy. For example, in the month of June alone, prices rose by almost 4 per cent. There is a considerable increase in the cost of living and a rise in inflation. Would you consider the economy to be the Government's greatest failure?

A: The talk that the economy is not moving and that it has failed, I completely reject that. There are certain accepted norms by which one judges the state of the economy. One is the budget deficit, another is inflation. The other is of course unemployment. And I have here with me figures. The budget deficit averaged 13 per cent for the people of 17 years (of UNP rule).

When I took over in 1994, the budget deficit was at 10 per cent. With a 70 per cent increase in war expenditure, we were able to keep it down to 8.4 per cent last year, which is lower than for the entire 17 year period of the UNP. For the first six months of 1996, it is at 7.8 per cent. This year it is going to be more than last year, but we believe that next year again we can keep it down to less than 7.5 per cent.

Inflation (during the ... years of UNP-rule) was at (an average of) 13 per cent. During some years it was over 20 per cent. For the first year of our

rule, with very strict budgeting and cutting down of expenditures, we were able to keep it down to 6-7 per cent. It was about five months after the war commenced that it started rising. During the second year (of the PA Government) it was at an average of about 12-13 per cent. That is with the war at its most intense, except for the period when the IPKF (Indian peace Keeping Force) was here. Then as far as investment is concerned, we have had for the first time Fortune 500 companies coming into Sri Lanka. During the entire 17 year period of the UNP, not a single Fortune 500 company came.

Q: Could you name the companies coming into Sri Lanka?

A: Shell, Caltex... big Korean and Japanese companies are about to come in to bid for infra structural projects as well as other investments. There has been a show of interest. All of them are in the process of negotiating. Also in the case of the Board of Investment (of the Sri Lankan Government), almost all investments were in the range of Rs 20-30 million. There were just two or three - Ansel Lanka - that had invested over a billion rupees under the last regime. We have signed 23 projects, each of which is about Rs 500 millions. Ten of them have already started work. Others are about to start work.

This shows that there is no lack of confidence in the Government. Whether investors come in depends not so much on the security situation, but on the confidence they have in the stability of the Government's economic policy. They themselves have told us this over and over again. The fact that investments are coming slowly but surely is a clear indication that the big international investors are not worried at all and that they are coming in. This is the best criterion to judge the health of our economic policy.

In fact, when I spoke to the Chairman of some of these big companies - Caltex, P Y O, Daewoo, Samsung, Great Industries - they all say that they are happy with the Government's economic policy. They can see it is going in the right direction. This year quite a few big company directors, who are known to be viscerally pro-UNP, have clearly told me that they are quite happy with the Government's poli-

cies... and I am sure they will still vote UNP at the next elections. They feel that the Government has got the economic fundamentals right. It is just that things are not moving fast enough for their liking. But they also understand that in a very tense war situation, it cannot be helped to some extent.

And some of them have told me that they believe the economy will take off by the end of the year, which is also my belief.

Q: The criticism that "things are not moving fast enough" is often being made. The strong criticism levelled against this Government is that it has the fundamentals right, that its broad strategy is correct and that it wants to do the right thing, but that it is unable to get the government machinery moving in the right direction. Many explanations have been given for this problem, such as lack of experience. Do you see this as a problem and what steps have you taken to remedy it?

A: It is moving, but it is not moving fast enough. The main reason for this is a malaise in the public sector that occurred before our government came in. It is a malaise that has come right down the line. I have personally seen this happening, especially after 1977. The public service was traumatised by state terror. Individuals were transferred 10 to 15 times within one year political revenge. Very senior government servants were thrown out of jobs within one week of the UNP coming into power and others were not given promotions at all.

This was a malaise that set in because of the terror on the one hand and corruption on the other. And corruption seeped down all the way right from the top, all the way to the bottom. Officers I know personally who were very honest and full of integrity ended up being very dishonest because it was the order of the day. And things moved depending on the amount of money handed out by various people. So we inherited a very sick public service.

When I became Chief Minister (of the Western Province), I remember saying I dread the day that we have to take over the (central) government, because of the state of the public sector. So now we are taking very seriously steps to correct this situation. I

have a committee which is doing emergency work recommending what sort of public sector reforms we should pursue. We will have the report by the end of the year and start implementing it very soon.

Q: What do you think has been the biggest failure of this Government. If you were to look back, what would you have done differently?

A: I wouldn't call it a failure, but our biggest public inability has been to get the public sector reformed and moving. In every other way the goals that we set ourselves - I think we have achieved them - you cannot finish achieving them in two years, but we are on the right track. We wanted to achieve four major goals. The first was getting rid of the terror regime and re-establishing democracy. The second was the resolution of the war. I think that in two years, we have done a great deal. We have had many, many successes, both on the peace front and the war front. While we are on the right track, certain developments, I would have preferred them to have happened differently.

The third goal is anti-corruption. You can say that at the top level - and that is far more insidious and therefore difficult to attack - all important decisions have not been taken due to the monetary consideration that anybody got. They have been taken only in the best interest of the country. We may have made honest mistakes in taking decisions, but certainly corruption did not play a role. At the second and third level corruption is still there, but much less, because we do not encourage it at the top.

The fourth is the economic front. This is certain on the right track, as I mentioned earlier, but I would have liked it to have taken off faster. We have achieved many things (in the economy), with all the limitations imposed by the war. But we have failed, at the moment, to do anything serious with the public service. And this is where I believe we have to take serious action. Internationally also we have regained our respectability, but we have a long way to go.

So I feel honestly, and I would not hesitate to say so if I felt otherwise, that we have placed the country on the right track to achieve all our major objectives. ●

VIVIENNE - WOMAN OF THE REVOLUTION

By Florence Wickramage

Violet Vivienne Goonewardena, a 'fiery' light in the firmament of Sri Lankan politics is no more. Following a sudden illness, she breathed her last in a private nursing home in Colombo on 3 October 1996, bringing the curtain down on nearly a five decade participation in politics and trade unionism, which had been blessed with an equal share of laurels, and brickbats. In or out of local or Parliamentary politics, Vivienne was 'marked' for the fiery, defiant and determined character, said to be inherited from the rebellious trait of the famous Boralugoda clan.

Born on 18 September 1916 to parents belonging to the landed gentry of that era and area, Vivienne Gunathilake was, however, not free from conservatism, considered an essential ingredient, or the hallmark of good upbringing for girls. Her school career at Musaeus College was marked with many successes, culminating in being appointed Head Girl in 1933. Spurred on by a growing spirit of nationalism, Vivienne at 17, while at school took an active interest in the Sooriyamal Movement an alternative for Poppy Day. She considered Poppy Day was essentially Western in that our war heroes at that time reaped no benefit from it. She encouraged her fellow classmates and finally the whole school to support her in the Sooriyamal Movement. The Sooriyamal Movement was the brainchild of the youthful red fraternity, organised to counteract the British Poppy Day. Vivienne conscious of the national movement which was gathering momentum, joined in as an active member with other 'Red' stalwarts like N M Perera, Philip and Robert Goonewardene to form the Lanka Sama Samaja Party which was later to stamp an indelible mark in the arena of Sri Lanka's politics. She attended meetings conducted by her uncles Philip and Robert Goonewardene the 'Boralugoda Lions'. She started working on the party paper 'Straight Left' and came face to face with a tryst with destiny. She met young Leslie Goonewardene, who came in as a working colleague and ended up as her life's

companion. Vivienne and Leslie, against her parents wishes married in 1939 and together continued in active left politics.

Vivienne made her mark in both local government and parliamentary politics. She represented Borella, Mahawatte, and Dehiwela in the Municipal Councils and was Member of Parliament for Colombo North for a considerable period of time. She was sworn in as a Junior Minister in Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike's Coalition Government in 1973. She was noted for her tongue-lashing during Parliament sessions and records reveal that many Members of Parliament, no matter what their standing was within the August House had been recipients of her fiery outbursts.

Apart from being a protagonist of the Sama Samaja Party, a municipal Councillor, a Member of Parliament and then a junior minister, Vivienne had been a trade unionist. She was the President of the All Ceylon Local Government Workers Association, which post she adorned until her demise. She championed the cause of the needy, the oppressed and downtrodden and was indomitable in her courage to fight for their cause. The Police Station and Courts of Law were not new ground for her. She continued triumphant in her cause, even after being

arrested, thrown on the floor and kicked by a constable at the police station in Kollupitiya. She looked at the police uniform which kicked her and simply asked 'have you got no mother'.

Vivienne had been a tower of strength to Leftist activists. On 14 October 1991, the Lanka Sama Samaja party felicitated Vivienne at a function held in her honour at the auditorium of the Colombo Public Library. It was in recognition of her fifty-five years of dedicated commitment to politics and service to the poor and also to wish her well in her 75th year.

Vivienne was honoured by India too. In the first week of August 1992 she was invited by India to attend as an honoured guest the fiftieth anniversary of the Quit India Movement held in the Red Fort, Delhi.

Vivienne celebrated her 80th birthday on 18 September. At a recent television interview she said that it was her ambition to see a Sri Lanka not burdened with economic woes. She wanted to see a land with equal opportunity for everybody where people, whatever, their caste, creed or colour would be able to live side by side with dignity. In her strong voice, she said that she would wish to live another five years to work towards this goal. But, this was not to be. She ended her life's mission for the downtrodden masses in flying colours.

Vivienne Goonewardene will be a name which would be an inspiration to her colleagues, for until she dies she was a live wire within the party. she pledged herself to uphold.

WHEN MEMORY DIES

by A.Sivanandan

"When Memory Dies", authored by A.Sivanandan, is a three generational novel of a Sri Lankan family's search for coherence and continuity in a country broken by colonial occupation and riven by ethnic wars. Saha looks for that coherence in a return to traditional values; Rajan in a quest for modernity that takes him to the mother country, and Vijay in a fight for socialism that ends in terror. But through the travail of their lives there emerges the possibility of another future.

The author, Sivanandan, came to Britain from Ceylon in the wake of the race riots of 1958, and walked straight into the riots of Notting Hill. He published two collections of non-fiction writings entitled **A Different Hunger**

and **Communities of Resistance**. His short stories have been published in his native Sri Lanka. He is the founder editor of the journal **Race & Class** and Director of the Institute of Race Relations in London.

What the critics say: "To have written this book - or even to read it - you have to have nerve. There are no flip evasions, or post-modern cop-outs.... Another time, another continent.... crassness and nobility on a Tolstoyan scale. A humbling book which grips and strengthens us." - **John Berger**

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(Continued from last issue)

Mines and unexploded devices:

This was perhaps the biggest hazard resulting in several dozens of mishaps. Local observers did not so much blame the army, as during the early period the army had lost control and people were in a hurry to go back to their homes. The worst affected areas were near Chunnakam, Tellipalai, Chankanai and Puttur, that had formed for some months part of the shifting frontline where the LTTE had buried mines. The LTTE hardly kept record of these, and perhaps those who planted the mines were not among the living. Even in the residential parts of Jaffna Town that had been the last scenes of fighting (eg: near Kailaspillayar Kovil), mines turned up in unusual places. It was about a month before the dangerous areas were identified and warning signs were posted. The following are some typical cases, mostly during May around Jaffna Town:

Ariyalai: Kulendran who was cleaning his well pulled out the last bucketful of mud and debris, which unknown to him had an unexploded shell. When he poured it out the shell exploded, injuring him in the stomach.

Temple Rd, near Kailasapillar Kovil: A 27 year old girl stepped under a coconut tree to pick up a palm leaf which she hoped to place on the ground and sit on, to attend to some domestic chores. A 'Jony' mine exploded causing her to lose a leg.

Rasavinthottatam: A small child playing near a dustbin picked up a small object that exploded, injuring the child.

28th May, Kondavil: A mine exploded under a tractor carrying returnees, killing eight.

Crimes Involving Rape, Physical Assault and Murder

29th April 1996: Navatkuli - Kachchai Road, Thenmaratchy

Troops were moving east towards Kachchai from Navatkuli when they stopped near a small peasant settlement. Most of the people moved away. Some soldiers entered a hut and raped the wife while the husband was chased and stabbed to death. When the matter was reported to the brigadier at Chavakacheri, he came to the settlement, apologised and gave an assurance that it would not happen again. By then the troops had moved on. When asked, the villagers said that it was not feasible for them to identify the culprits in an identification parade. Other military officials in Jaffna too were aware of the incident. But as far as we are aware no attempt was made to get at the culprits by working through NCOs or to discipline them. The matter was effectively hushed up.

Jaffna: The Contest Between Man and the Beast Within

17th May 1996: This second incident of rape which took place in the same brigadier's area, may have resulted in part from inaction over the first incident.

Manthuvil lies in the interior area west of Varany between the Jaffna-Kodikamam (Kandy) Road and the Nelliady-Kodikamam Road. A family with two sisters married to two men in the betel leaf trade had remained behind, although several others had left because of an increasing military presence in the area.

We shall describe here the location in some detail since it is about this area that the largest incidence of crime by armed

THE UNIVERSITY TEACHERS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, JAFFNA (UTHR(Jaffna)) SRI LANKA

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forces personnel has been concentrated. Much of this region lies within a trapezium whose parallel sides are to the south: the 8 mile section of the Kandy Road starting from Nunavil and running roughly east through Chavakacheri (2 miles), Meesalai (5 miles) and Kodikamam (8 miles); and to the north the Kanagampuliady - Varany Road: through Vembirai Junction 3 miles east of the Kanagampuliady. The other two sides are the Nunavil-Kanagampuliady road containing Mattuvil and the 2 1/2 mile section of the Kodikamam - Pt Pedro road ending at Varany. Two other roads that are relevant to this report are the Meesalai - Vembirai road running 2 1/2 miles northwards. Manthuvil is nearer Vembirai to the east side (Varany side) of this road. From Chavakacheri running northwards is a road to Kanagampuliady containing Kerudavil.

Kanagampuliady and Vembirai are now just enclosed within the new wall the Army has constructed covering the Puttur-Kodikamam road. North of this wall lies the uncleared area which includes Varany. The wall is guarded by soldiers at regular intervals. Army camps have been sited at about half mile intervals on the trunk road to Kandy. The Army is thus very much around the place at Manthuvil, Kerudavil and Mattuvil and there are also small army camps such as the one under a lieutenant at Kerudavil. Manthuvil in this narrative is a housing colony. The time of the incident was just about a month since

the Army entered Thenmaratchy, and Manthuvil may have then been technically an uncleared area. 13 soldiers were killed in a confrontation with the LTTE at Kanagampuliady about late June.

About 6.30 in the evening five armed men wearing uniforms of an unspecified kind came to the shop and began as though they wanted to buy something. They then shot dead the husbands of the two sisters, another male inmate of the house and a child of three. The two sisters and another woman were subject to severe assault and rape. The assailants left after robbing jewellery from the house. According to local sources the main motive of the assailants was robbery. The rape was attested to, to visiting journalists by the medical authorities at Pt. Pedro Hospital. The assailants were described as speaking broken Tamil, and Sinhalese among themselves.

Thangarajah Puvaneswary (36), one of the victims, and her sister who was in a very bad condition, were ward at Pt Pedro hospital. There was some confusion even among the hospital staff as to who the perpetrators were as Manthuvil was more than 2 miles interior from either main road and was then considered part of the 'uncleared area' - i.e., where the LTTE had relatively unhindered access. The strongest testimony, however, came from Puvaneswary who asked a doctor to translate to the visiting correspondent of the Hindu, her firm statement that the perpetrators were members of the Sri Lankan Army.

Although we had on two past occasions recorded instances of extreme sexual abuse by the LTTE, these were done under conditions of extreme secrecy as becomes such a group. The first incident came out through internal testimony from a disgraced member of the LTTE, and the second through a fellow prisoner. The incident in Manthuvil, however, is highly uncharacteristic of the LTTE, nor does it seem possible for LTTE cadre to carry out such calculated deception to give the Army a bad name.

To the experienced Jaffna folk an LTTE cadre stands out even if unarmed and out of uniform. In this case the highest weightage must be given to Puvaneswary's testimony. A woman who has suffered the ultimate insult and the greatest deprivation has little reason to cover up for the perpetrators. An area being uncleared may well suit men moved by lust and wanting to minimise the risk of being found out. The LTTE presence is also thin and soldiers do move into such areas in small numbers.

By the official Military Spokesman claiming that the rape was the work of the LTTE with a view to discredit the SL

Army, any serious inquiry had been precluded. Another problem that called for firm action was buried.

May 1996: Kachchai, Thenmaratchy:

The man went early in the morning to cultivate the family's field. Later in the morning his wife took tea for him. Both were later found brutally murdered. Rape is suspected. There was then a large presence of troops in the area.

Early July: Mattuvil, Thenmaratchy:

Three soldiers in civils, two of them carrying arms, went to the house and pulled out a young girl. Her brother went to her defence and was assaulted badly. Crying was heard from the house while the girl was dragged out. The next door neighbour came to their aid and was kicked forcefully on the abdomen. He immediately passed urine and was later unable to do so until treated, owing to the swelling of his abdomen. The girl was raped and brought back home. The men warned the family that should they report the matter to the higher authorities, the whole family would be wiped out.

The girl, her brother and neighbour were later warded at Jaffna Teaching Hospital.

4th August: Kerudavil, Thenmaratchy

Terrified screams were heard from the house about 11.00 p.m., where the father was alone with his young daughter. The neighbours were themselves too terrified to venture out. In the morning the two were found brutally murdered - the daughter after being raped. Soldiers from a nearby camp surrounded the area in the morning and claimed the LTTE had done the deed.

The girl's brother, a student at the University of Jaffna escaped death as he had gone that day to Jaffna to collect his books.

The mangled bodies of the father and daughter were then brought to the Chavakacheri Base Hospital and the public was requested to identify them!

Rape was reportedly attested by the hospital authorities. A singular feature in the incident which adds to the complexity was the brutal murder of the father. His finger nails being pulled out is suggestive of torture. The main army camp, HQ 522 for Thenmaratchy, is in Sarasalai, hardly 2 miles from the location of the incident, and there are small camps regularly sited in this strategic area. These factors with the circumstances (i.e. screaming and time involved) and the nature of the killing (LTTE assassinations are usually quick single bullet affairs) almost decisively rule out the LTTE.

Attacks from behind civilian cover

A continuing problem experienced almost on a daily basis is that of the LTTE using civilian cover without inhibitions in attempts to provoke the Army. During the first two months after the return of civilians, food queues were among the commonest places for such attacks. The usual modus operandi was to creep into the

queue, roll a grenade along the line of the queue towards a soldier maintaining order and then run away. In all cases on record soldiers have responded in a disciplined manner asking civilians to lie down safely before using their weapons. Some typical instances are:

25th April, St. Xavier's Seminary Colombagam: 1 soldier injured.

Mid May, Kalladdy Junction, Jaffna: Grenades thrown at soldiers manning food distribution queues on 3 successive days. One soldier killed and two injured.

23rd May, Chavakacheri Ladies College: An LTTE girl in school uniform threw a grenade while a group of girls was talking to some soldiers. Some school children were injured.

The Three Zones

Jaffna is divided into the so called "cleared" and "uncleared" areas and Jaffna Town. A wall described by wags as the Great Wall of China runs for miles separating the cleared and uncleared areas. This wall in places is made partly of aluminium taken to a large extent from nearby house roofing. Its composition changes from place to place. In some places it takes the form of bunds made up of earth and rubble from bull-dozed houses, reinforced by stems from palmyra trees freely cut down by the thousands. The uncleared area comprises large swathes of territory west of Kantharodai, Uduvil and Nachimar Kovil in Valikamam. Vaddukkoddai, Chankanai and Manipay lie outside it. As one goes north west from Nachimar Kovil, just north of Jaffna Town, one passes Vaddukkoddai and reaches Ponnalai where one encounters for the first time an Army presence to protect the Karainagar causeway. Chankanai was said to have a significant LTTE presence of about 100-200 cadre. In Vadammaratchy, Vallipuram, Kudathanai & Kattaveli east of Pt. Pedro, remain outside the wall.

In the east the wall begins at Munai two miles east of Pt Pedro, runs east along the coast to Katkivalam, turns south inwards enclosing Varathuppalai, Puttalai, Manthikai and then runs parallel enclosing the Jaffna road up to Puttur, from whence it covers the Kodikamam road into Thenmaratchy. Thus one taking the Manthikai - Kodikamam Rd (9 miles) to Thenmaratchy would leave the cleared area at Manthikai and re-enter it at Kodikamam. Those with fuel driven private vehicles are not allowed to take them into uncleared areas. Thus one wanting to travel from Pt. Pedro to Kodikamam will first have to take the road to Jaffna and then the Kandy road, doing 35 miles instead of 10. A push bicycle therefore remains the most expedient means of transport. No public transport is available in uncleared areas. Often a person wanting to visit a neighbour or his field just across the new wall would have to obtain a pass and travel several miles to cross the wall through a check point. On the

uncleared side the wall has barbed wire rolls and minefields and has sentry huts at regular intervals.

Theoretically the Army's writ runs within the "cleared" area while the LTTE roams outside. There are occasional forays or large scale cordon-and-search operations by the Army. A large one during May went into Valikamam East and West. There were casualties on both sides but public relations remained good during the 2-3 days of the operation. The rest of the LTTE cadre (estimated at 100) went underground and escaped, unlike during the round up at the Chankanai Temple where cadre were trapped inside and the whole temple was destroyed with the cadre. Apparently the Army feels such operations are not worth the effort and tries instead to contain the LTTE numbers and the conflict to one of low intensity.

The LTTE in the uncleared Valikamam area is physically cut off except for radio links with their command. Thus they are completely dependent on the local population for their sustenance. The situation is that the Vadammaratchi & Thenmaratchy sectors are different in that there is easier access to the Vanni from both. The attitude of the people to the LTTE has changed. Now in general there is a tendency to uneasiness and an overwhelming desire to be left alone, and not to be involved or importuned. There have been several cases where people have informed on the LTTE.

The LTTE is also aware of this change and is trying to improve its public relations. However long posters have gone up telling the people not to be fooled by all the rehabilitation and offers of goodwill by the Government, pointing to past history. The usual warning to those collaborating with the State or its Forces has been clearly reiterated. To underscore their warning they have carried out several extra-judicial executions. One of the earliest was of Dr. Sri Vallipuram who met one of his old "buddies" in the Army and became 'too friendly'. Another was a businessman near Nachimar Kovilady. One of the women who took part in the mass-looting of LTTE stocks towards the end of Riveresa (Sunshine) III was also "lamp-posted" - i.e. tied to a lamp post and shot dead. Immediately after the Army took over Kodikamam a large number of people looted the stores of the LTTE which had been filled with hundreds of sacks full of flour and other items. People were angry that these things were sold at high prices and were on short supply until that time. Even a large quantity of coconuts (in the thousands) which were sold by the LTTE at exorbitant prices earlier were set on fire by the LTTE when they were leaving the area to make sure that they did not benefit the people who remained behind against their orders.

The arrangements between the cleared and uncleared areas are interesting. There is dusk to dawn curfew within

the cleared area. Though people have been told that in an emergency such as a medical one, they can approach the check points, few would venture to do so. Entry to cleared areas is only at certain points in the "green wait" during day time. To go to Pt. Pedro and other enclaves a pass is needed (requiring a complicated approval system).

Life in uncleared areas could be very uncertain when confrontation takes place: **28th July 1996:** Thenmaratchy: Late in the morning the LTTE ambushed an army party at the junction where the Navatkuli - Kerathivu Road meets the road from Chavakacheri, killing an officer and nine other men. In the afternoon ten shells were fired into the area from Palaly. A particular reason for the shelling may have been to disperse the LTTE from the area to enable other soldiers to move in.

According to local sources the officer and his party had gone to that area on a tip-off, but had not anticipated a large group of the LTTE.

May 1996: Soldiers who were part of a sweep of the uncleared area after a tip off in West Valikamam, happened to camp at a house in Sankarathai where there was also a presence of women Tigers. The latter hid in the ceiling and at length one of them coughed. The soldiers left leaving behind a delayed explosive device. Four women were killed.

Check Points

Increasing the number of checkpoints and the hassle of going through them may irritate the people, but they may yet be prepared to put up with it in the hope that things might ease out after some time, and even understand or rationalise the necessity for it. But the attitude of army personnel towards them is going to determine whether these will turn out to be legitimate security checks or harassment of civilians. Up to early July, in Jaffna, the Army had taken great pains to make the people feel that the checking owes to the security situation and were even very apologetic about it. This went down well with the people. The experience of people in the East has shown that most of the time the Army's checking impressed them as a fruitless exercise carried on merely to harass them. It reached a ridiculous level during the early 1995 peace talks where the LTTE cadre were most often given VIP treatment while the ordinary civilians continued to go through routine checking standing in queues in the noon-day sun.

More recently, in July and August, indiscipline at checkpoints has been on the increase with cases of petty theft reported. At Kodikamam checkpoint a transistor radio was taken from a young man, who insisted of staying until he got his goods back. The Army then sent away his companions. He is now missing and the Army denies any knowledge of the matter. Such incidents however, still remain fairly isolated and most people are un-

ware of them.

Detainees, Torture and Missing Persons

October 1995 - April 1996: It was mentioned earlier that about 26 mostly young persons who fell to the Army were held by the Military police. They were kept in chains and regularly beaten until 5th December. Many of them were released in June this year.

19th April - May 1996: Possibly about 300 youth were detained during the immediate aftermath of the massive return into Valikamam. Apart from suspects, the number also included some LTTE deserters who had surrendered, former members of the LTTE and 15 persons who arrived in Valikamam by boat. Many of them were tortured. The mother of an ex-member of the LTTE who worked in the Kachcheri said that her son had been beaten on the fingers with the palms placed on a flat surface and that there were burn marks on his buttocks, probably due to electrocution. A group of about 60 detainees was sent to Colombo. Following protests, the procedure adopted was to send those who had been questioned to KKS Police Station. It was at this stage that the ICRC made contact with them. This could take several weeks after detention, with the family having no contact, no acknowledgement and no legal hold during the intervening period - a procedure extremely unacceptable after the Mullaitivu debacle and in the context of current operations in the Vanni.

May 1996: Kalviankadu: A torture fatality: A young boy selected for admission to the engineering degree course was arrested and tortured by soldiers attached to Kalviankadu camp on a tip-off that he was hiding arms. He then started having fits and was admitted to Ward 1 at Jaffna Teaching Hospital. The victim who later died had said that he was hung upside down by his big toes and beaten. The officer-in-charge at Kalviankadu is reported as having said that they had made a mistake.

Irupalai, Valikamam:

The boy who had done his A-Levels was living on the Irupalai - Kondavil road, near Rasa Veethy junction. He was taken by the Army and a prominent religious leader in the area assured the officer-in-charge at the local army camp that he knew the boy well and that he had nothing to do with the LTTE. The officer gave him an assurance that the boy would be released in 48 hours. He was released 48 hours later and in a further 48 hours' time he was dead. It turned out that he had been laid flat on the ground and had been pounded on his stomach with a pestle. The local population who had earlier trusted the Army became very disturbed.

Note: Both this and the previous incident were obtained by us from different but very reliable sources. Some factors including the geography are close. We have not been able to ascertain some points regard-

ing the second to say definitely that it is distinct from the first. But the divergences suggest that.

Mid-July: Ariyalai: An LTTE cadre escaping after killing Mr. Ramalingam (see below) had taken the bicycle of Satkunam's son who was then bathing. The cycle was later returned. Satkunam reported this to a nearby army post. The Army had not seemed interested. A few days later when the Army set about making arrests, two armed men in civils came to Satkunam's place at about 5.00 P.M and asked for him. His wife told them that he would be back shortly. Satkunam's daughter asked who they were and they showed Army identity cards. The men were Sinhalese speaking. But one of them spoke with an accented Tamil. While waiting for Satkunam the men spotted his son who was studying, and they took him and went away saying that he was being taken to Subhas Hotel. The father had then regularly gone to the Subhas Hotel Army HQ in Jaffna Town only to receive denials. The local army camp at Punkamkulam Junction also denied the arrest. As long as ten days later, the ICRC office in Jaffna had no record of the arrest.

15th July 1996: Rasavinthottam: Two young men, Ravi Coomarasamy and Prabakaran were going for evening worship at the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission in Chundikuli, where the former was resident. They had just closed their shop in town. A man who saw them being questioned at the Rasavinthottam sentry point later checked with Prabakaran's mother if her son had returned home. On receiving a reply in the negative, he told her what he had seen. The mother with her daughter went to the checkpoint. Without denying the arrest they were told to go home and that the boy would come back safely. subsequent appeals to the authorities have met with denials.

Ravi had earlier worked for a communication centre in Colombo that had been frequented by Varathan who masterminded the JOC bomb blast in June 1991 and had been known to Ravi. Ravi was among several people wanted for questioning, and fearing the worst, he absconded in Jaffna. From 1992 he had been involved in the work of the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission. He had also earlier undergone surgery for hole-in-the-heart.

The case against those accused of helping Varathan was concluded in 1993 and all were released except for the three officials of the Upcountry People's Front whose continued incarceration was said to have been for political reasons. The UPF leader after his release following the August 1994 elections became a Deputy Minister in the present Government. The husband of another detainee, Ravi's sister, committed suicide after the press quoting police sources had falsely called her a hard core member of the LTTE and a mistress of Varathan's.

Brother Stanley of the Pentecostal

Mission had unremittably gone to the Army and explained Ravi's position. About a week later the Army verbally admitted having Ravi, but did not allow Brother Stanley to see him. Up to the second week of August the ICRC had no record of Ravi's arrest.

17th July 1996: Neeraviady, Jaffna Town: Gunaratnam Ronnie Arichunan was married 2 years and his wife was expecting their first child. He had done a stint with the LTTE until 1991 and was subsequently an active worker of the Zion Church. He recently found employment at the Jaffna Post Office as a substitute. Having left home at 7.00 A.M. he was delegated that morning to deliver packages of stamps and stationery to four sub-post offices. Having made his deliveries at Jaffna SPO, and Jaffna Town PO, he went to Neeraviady SPO where the post master's assistant told him that the post master had gone out for a short time. Arichunan went promising to return after making his final delivery at Navanthurai SPO. From that time he has been missing. All army points on the route and the military authorities in Jaffna deny having taken him.

July end: Meesali North, Thenmaratchy, off Meesali - Vembirai Road:

Murali (19) the eldest son with a younger brother and sister lived with his parents and was a salesman in Chavakacheri town. At about 10.00 A.M. the lieutenant in charge of the camp next door who was friendly with him asked him as a favour to borrow for his use a video deck from a house a few doors away on Murali's side of the camp. Several people who left for the Vanni had left their belongings in that house. Having taken his breakfast Murali proceeded there. Just a short distance away he passed a house that was a sentry point with 3 soldiers. One called Murali in, accused him of being an LTTE informant and took him into a dark room. The three soldiers took large sticks and proceeded to belabour him on the head. Murali soon passed out. Shortly before the change of guard in the evening, the soldiers revived him by kicking him and cut him all over the body and finally made a deep cut in the neck causing him to pass out once more.

The soldiers then tied a nylon saree around his neck and dragged him into the compound of the house behind, lifted the cover of the septic tank, thrust him in, and replaced the cover. They had evidently presumed him dead or dying.

During the course of the night the lady of the house in the compound heard a feeble, but continual whimpering. What had happened was that the water in the septic tank had revived Murali for the second time. Every now and then he gathered his strength, made a vocal effort and sank back exhausted. In the morning the lady insisted to the men of the house that someone had been whimpering on the premises. The men who had slept soundly

were sceptical, but were persuaded by the lady to join her in a search. Having searched everywhere, the men said that it was time to call it off. This, Murali had barely heard in a state of semiconsciousness, and was driven to make a final effort. This was heard through the air tube protruding from the tank. They lifted the cover and promptly alerted Murali's family who had inquired for him far and near with sinking hearts, and also from the lieutenant at the army camp. The lieutenant had a look and went away.

Murali was then admitted to Ward 30 of the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. When he was better he said that he could identify one of the soldiers involved, but later was fearful of doing so. The lieutenant at the army camp who had seen him took no action, and those higher up evidently did not hear about it.

31st July: Periyamavady, Chavakacheri: Muhunthan was a young co-tailor assisting Ponnuthurai Sinnathurai (47) who had his tailor's shop at Sangathanai, 1 mile from Chavakacheri on the Kodikamam Road. At 5.30 PM Muhunthan was returning home after a Sinhalese class when he was stopped at Periyamavady by four soldiers on two motor bikes. A soldier asked him in Tamil, "How is your body?" Muhunthan was heard replying "It is OK". The soldiers asked for Sinnathurai's house and Muhunthan offered to take them there. The soldiers told Sinnathurai that they wanted some clothes for which an order had been previously placed. While Sinnathurai and Muhunthan rode towards the shop on bicycles, the soldiers followed on motorcycles.

Having collected the clothes one soldier went back to town and returned with an army truck. Muhunthan and Sinnathurai were loaded into the truck with their bicycles and taken away. The families have since been making a fruitless search in various army camps in the area. Although nearly all scenes in this episode had been publicly witnessed, the authorities have continued to deny any knowledge of the event.

1st August (approx): Chundikuli, Jaffna Town: The leader of a Christian youth organisation in front of St. John's College was waiting for two young labourers from Ariyalai to help him re-erect a fence that had fallen down during the last military operation. At about 10.30 AM soldiers came to the premises and asked if he had engaged two youths to work and whether he knew them. He replied in the affirmative and said that he knew one of the youths. He was then asked to come to Eechamottai army camp to record a statement. To his good fortune perhaps, he was met on the way by a person of standing who told the soldiers that he knew the youth leader well.

At Eechamattai he was loaded into a tractor, driven to Passaiyoor army camp, blindfolded and taken to a small room. Without any warning he received a severe

kick on his stomach. As he bent down in pain he received another blow on his neck, followed by his face being dashed against a wall. The youth leader collapsed onto a rail. Then several men beat him with wires, cables and s-lon pipes while being accused of belonging to the LTTE. His every denial brought forth blows of greater severity. At length he was brought back in the tractor and left from where he had been taken. To the naturally timid youth this had been a physically and mentally devastating experience.

His having been lucky may be a strange comment. But it must be one of the few times that a victim of such torture was released on the same day and did not go missing.

Remark on Torture

The accounts above describe the types of torture that are now commonly inflicted. A common experience of the detainees is that they are blindfolded and blows would start raining any time. Such experiences started occurring on a considerably enhanced scale from July. Other kinds of torture too have been reported from the time of the Army's takeover, particularly in rural areas. One is the petrol bag treatment: i.e. a plastic bag with a small quantity of petrol is placed over the victim's head and he then is suffocated with fumes.

A postman from Palai who used to drive his car during the weekends to carry out trade in betel leaves had gone to Nunavil. He was taken by the Army and locked up in a room with a fierce Alsatian dog, leading to his being severely bitten.

(Continued in next issue)

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Fazil Bary sat in the back of a Toyota Land-cruiser pick-up, with a large black kettle resting on a US Army ammunition box in front of him. Three other bearded men in loose brown robes were squashed in alongside.

Now 35, Fazil spent all his young adulthood as a mojahed, "a warrior of God", resisting the Soviet occupation of his country. But when the mojahedin leaders took over the government four years ago, they "deviated from Islam". Disappointed and betrayed, Fazil had no choice but to go back to the struggle, he explains. His younger companions nod sagely.

With the earflaps of his Russian soldier's hat flopping as he talked ("My turban's inside the car", he smiled), it could have been pure comedy: the glasses of tea, the tin of snuff in his hand, his name scrawled on the bonnet of the Land-cruiser just to remind potential rivals that he was the one who liberated it.

Yet this is no bunch of amiable ruffians, affable though they may be to foreign reporters. As we chat, the crump of mortar fire echoes round the mountainsides. We are on the front line of an astonishing advance which has seen the Taliban militias capture Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, and several other key cities, moving forward some 200 miles in three weeks. The Panjshir Valley ahead of us is the last redoubt of the retreating government army.

Everywhere they go, the Taliban are imposing a version of Islam which has no parallel in the world. People have been forced at gunpoint to attend the mosque. Women are barred from work, men ordered to grow beards. Television is banned, and satellite dishes are shot at. They snatch music cassettes from cars and smash them with rocks by the roadside.

Fazil Bary calls himself a mullah. He has a wife and a five year old daughter. "I don't want her to go to school", he boasts. "I will give her whatever rights are bestowed by the Koran, but no more. The only knowledge which is compulsory for women as much as men is knowledge of the Koran".

Hundreds of spent cartridges from the Soviet anti-aircraft cannon they were using as long-range artillery lay on the ground nearby. The ammunition was a token of women's work, though the militias were not to know this. A slip of paper in every tin contained the name of the packer, and the quality controller. All were Russian female names.

Zoom back from the detail, and the scene had an emblematic message. When the world had more than one su-

perpower each side pumped billions of dollars of hardware into this dirt-poor central Asian country in pursuit of some sort of mission. With the end of the Cold War is reversion to a medieval past, not

TYRANNY OF THE TALIBAN

Afghanistan has all-but fallen to the soldiers of Islam. And now its people, particularly the women, brace themselves for a religious crackdown. As the fanatical militiamen continue to drive the mojahedin out of the country, Jonathan Steele goes to Kabul, a city emerging from the rubble of war into a different terror.

to mention the deaths of more than a million Afghans.

A scrap metal merchant with a crane and a few flatbed trucks could make a fortune along the road from Kabul to the north. Disabled military vehicles litter the ground, though to the naked eye it is often hard to tell which ones were hit by fire and which just left to die.

On our first trip to the front we saw a Soviet tank slap-bang in the middle of the road, apparently bequeathed by the retreating government forces in some state of disrepair. To any night-time driver it was a traffic hazard of enormous proportions. Sure enough, at the same spot two days later, we came across a second tank, tipping at a terrifying angle over the side of the road and now equally useless. A Taliban driver had clearly swerved too late and too far.

If there is little to choose between the Taliban and the mojahedin who stayed loyal to the government when it comes to mastering complicated weaponry, the Taliban have the edge in morale. "Weapons help, but our strength comes from the Koran" is a refrain you hear every time you accost them for a roadside interview.

Their second source of inner power is contempt for the mojahedin leaders' "deviations". Like evangelistic bible-bashers, the Taliban are Islamic Protestants stirring up the faithful against the wayward prophets of the establishment who betrayed the people's hopes. It is not just their material corruption but the way the men who led the struggle against the Russians turned on each other after victory.

Most Taliban had never been to Kabul before last week. Seeing the city will only have redoubled their determination. While war with the Russians left the country in tatters, Kabul remained un-

spoilt. Set on a plateau with the magnificent high-veld climate, at least from spring to autumn, of Johannesburg or Harare, the burning blue of its skies is softened by great ridges of mountains around it. Their colour, khaki, (from the local word for "dust") gave other languages a new word. Only the heavy snows of winter add a non-African dimension.

Now much of the city no longer exists. Sarajevo has become the world's yardstick for war, the best known measure of a modern city brought to ruin. Kabul is three times worse. Rockets were the main cause of destruction in the Bosnian capital.

Kabul was hit by heavy artillery shells and even on occasion bombs dropped by aircraft. Since most buildings were made of khaki mud bricks from the surrounding hillsides, which crumble at the slightest blast, the city has gone from dust to dust. The northern districts which were out of range of the shelling are the only parts spared. They are overcrowded with refugees.

Entering the wasteland of a city, the Taliban must feel their holy mission to clean away an irresponsible mojahedin leadership is fully justified. Most of them spent years in madrassahs (religious schools) in the refugee camps of Pakistan, being trained as mojahedin. They did not expect they would one day form a second wave of warriors. This time purifying their country from compatriots and fellow Muslims rather than foreign infidel and their communist lackeys.

The spark was lit by Mohammed Omar Akhund, a senior mullah from Kandahar, who is in his late thirties. Unlike the first wave of mojahedin political leaders, who spent most of the war against Russia in their villas in Pakistan's north western city of Peshawar. Omar went into battle. He lost an eye. Two years ago he summoned the faithful to a new war, calling for volunteers from the demobbed mojahedin. He called them the Taliban, the "students" or "seekers". Most were country boys from Pashtun villages in the south, where women have always been treated as little more than house-slaves.

But no army can flourish solely on morale, comradeship, and faith in an idea. The big question is who is helping them with training, supplies, logistics and fuel. As they sit fearfully in their homes in Kabul, few middle-class professionals have any doubts. Behind the Taliban stands Pakistan. Although the Pakistani government insists it is not them, everyone remembers they issued the same falsehoods when their intelli-

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gence services, the ISL, were aiding and training the mojahedin in the 1980's.

Hard evidence is hard to gather but before their assault on the eastern city of Jalalabad in mid September eyewitnesses saw the Taliban forces cross into Afghanistan from Pakistan. Three days before Kabul fell a Taliban plane was hijacked by its own crew and flown to a government airfield. The pilot said he was defecting to show what Pakistan was doing. Seven Pakistani officers were on the plane.

Pakistan's motives, according to Afghan observers, are to have a friendly and subservient government in control of Afghanistan. It wants to install leaders in Kabul who come from the powerful Pashtu tribes of the south rather than the Tajibs and Uzbeks of the north. For years the Pakistanis pinned their hopes on the Pashtu fundamentalist, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, one of the original mojahedin leaders, but he blotted his copybook by failing to join a united government in Kabul after 1992. By the time he did so this June, his stock had fallen and the Taliban were already on the move.

Suspicion also centres on the United States. The Central Intelligence Agency used the Pakistani ISI as its main conduit for sending Stinger missiles and tons of other arms to the mojahedin in anti-Soviet days. Observers assume America knew of the new Pakistani link with the Taliban, and did nothing to discourage it.

Did they go further? Were they actively advising the Taliban? Certainly, Washington developed close contacts. In May two senior Taliban leaders attended a conference there run by Senator Hank Brown, who has long maintained an in-

terest in the region. US -diplomats regularly travelled to Taliban headquarters, most recently one week before the final assault on Kabul when Robin Raphel, the assistant secretary of state for Asian affairs, saw the mullahs.

Such visits can be explained by any government's need for contact with opposition groups, but the timing raises doubts as does the generally approving line which US officials take towards the Taliban. John Holtzman, the deputy chief of mission in Islamabad, who is widely assumed to be the CIA's station chief in Pakistan, tells reporters that the Taliban can play a useful role in ending Afghanistan's long civil war by providing a strong central government. Astonishingly, Holtzman was planning to fly to Kabul last week shortly after the Taliban took over. The head of protocol had already gone to the airport to meet him, when the Clinton administration realised an image of cosying up with ultra fundamentalists could be a disaster with American women voters. The visit was postponed.

The Soviet Invasion in December 1979 turned Afghanistan into a Cold War cockpit and the Russians cannot escape the blame for initiating the slide to disaster. But in the judgment of history the United States may be seen as equally guilty. If not more so, Moscow's interference in an unstable neighbour's affairs at least had a kind of strategic rationale. The United States' launching of the biggest covert operation in the CIA's history was entirely cynical, fighting to the last Afghan in order to bleed the Soviet Union as heavily as it could. The people whom Washington called the "moochie were treated as pawns, and the corruption which led in their leaders'

downfall after they took Kabul in 1992 had its seeds in the easy CIA money of the 1980's. Yet when victory was achieved, the US gave almost no aid to rebuild the war-torn country.

The new USA position takes cynicism a stage further. With the Soviet Union gone, today's ideological enemy is Iran. The Taliban are Sunni. Their virulent fundamentalism is directed against the Shi'ites of Iran, who, in their attitudes to women, present a model as sinfully progressive as that which the Taliban found in Kabul.

When King Amanullah was forced to abdicate in January 1929 his sin was to do what the Taliban are going today, except in reverse. He opened girls' schools, and forbade government officials from practising polygamy. Influenced by a grand tour in Europe, he and his wife switched to western dress, and forced the people of Kabul to do likewise. It was too much too soon. The mullahs declared the King an infidel, and fundamentalists from the countryside descended triumphantly on Kabul to chase him away. Afghanistan's first attempt at modernisation had come to an abrupt end.

Today we are seeing what appears to be the death of the second attempt. It has been a slower and infinitely more bloody affair. Take away the anti-communist rhetoric, and you find the programme of the Moscow-backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan which took power in a coup in April 1978 was primarily aimed at bringing a feudal mullah-ridden country into the modern world.

The PDPA was building on reforms already started by the post-war King Zahir Shah and his cousin, Mohammad

In the Footsteps of the Ayatollah

Victory for the Taliban makes Afghanistan the third country in the world to be ruled by a militant Islamic regime: and the experiences of Iran and Sudan are not happy precedents.

Iran's leaders, inspired by Ayatollah Khomeini, came to power with the overthrow of the Shah in 1979, and have been running things more or less according to his book ever since.

Strict rules governing alcohol and the status and dress of women are still the norm, despite discreet home-brewing and occasional glimpses of Gucci boots under flowing chadors in the wealthier suburbs of north Tehran. Satellite dishes have been officially banned, but many are still in semi-surreptitious use. Intellectually, there are some stirrings beneath the surface.

Politically, Iran has been virulently anti-American since the collapse of the Peacock Throne. It has supported radical movements in the Middle East, such as the Lebanese hostage-taking Islamic Jihad and Hizbullah and others fighting Israel - seen as Uncle Sam's expansionist client. Khomeini's infamous fatwa against Salman Rushdie has become a hallmark, though recently there have been signs that more pragmatic and world friendly leaders would like to drop it.

Sudan is even more of a parish internationally and a mess

at home: the largest country in Africa has only been ruled by an Islamist-orientated military regime since 1989 but its economy is in a shambles, relations with its neighbours in crisis, and the country remains hobbled by a long and costly civil war.

It has a per capita income of just \$200 and in Khartoum goats forage for scarce grass even along some central streets. Lt General Omar Ahmed Bashir and Dr Hassan Turabi, head of the powerful National Islamic Front, have transformed a once multi-religious country into a strict Islamic state and established close ties with Muslim militants from around the world.

Khartoum currently faces limited UN sanctions over its alleged role in the attempted assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Iran, and Sudan have committed appalling human rights abuses including torture and arbitrary killings as well as judicial floggings, amputations and executions. The Taliban believe some Iranians - from the rival Shi'ite branch of Islam - are dangerous liberals and modernisers. Sudan could turn out to be a good friend for the new mob in Kabul.

-Ian Black

Daoud. While they moved gradually, the authoritarian radicals of the PDPA were systematic. They increased the pace, creating a secular and republican state, outlawing opposition, forcing reluctant villagers to send their daughters to school, and trying to undermine the role of the mullahs, who in Afghanistan happen to be landlords as well as religious leaders.

The mojahedin revolt was the predictable result. The Soviet intervention to prop up the regime turned rebellion into national resistance. The difference from the 1920's was that by 1979 three decades of gradual modernisation had created an urban professional community which saw the traditionalists of the countryside as their enemy.

When the "moodge" entered Kabul four years ago, reporters found the middle-class with the same anxieties as today. The new rulers forced women to wear the chadour, the veil over the hair and shoulders, but allowed the face to be seen. They banned films and romantic music. They talked of separating women and men at work, not stopping women working altogether. But the restrictions soon eased, and the fears evaporated. Girls' schools continued, and the film and music bans fell away. The PDPA's school curriculum remained in force, with merely the addition of a new subject. Islamic rules and culture.

It was only this summer, when the fundamentalist, Hekmatyar joined the government as prime minister, that the regime tightened. He took women announcers off television and ordered cinemas to close. Music and films were banned from TV.

So the Taliban's grim clampdown is not a difference of kind. It is simply the final solution, the logical end-point of a trend back into the past which the PDPA radicals first provoked, and then abetted as they backed off their own reforms in an attempt to undermine the mojahedin's support.

For watchers from abroad it is an amazing reversal of modernity. Everywhere else in the ill-named "global village" the forces of globalisation backed by the electronic media are crashing into local cultures, bringing the values of the city, or rather of the northern hemisphere metropolis, into the remotest rural areas. In Afghanistan, uniquely, the narrowness of the countryside is determined to squeeze the town.

For the people of Kabul it is nothing less than a disaster. In an eastern district of the capital I visited the only woman doctor who still dares to keep open her consulting room, a small second floor office above a row of shops. "I go on working not for the money, but as part of my struggle for emancipation,

RAO FORCED TO STEP DOWN AS CONGRESS PRESIDENT

By T N Gopalan

Former Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao has stepped down as the President of the Indian National Congress. Mr Sitaram Kesri, a north Indian leader who served as the treasurer of the Congress under Rao is the new President.

That the mulishly stubborn Rao should have been displaced is some kind of a victory for those who care for rectitude and accountability in public life.

It is not that Kesri represents any revolutionising force or that there is any chance that the Congress's stables could be cleaned up - the facts that Rao continues to be the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) and The Deve Gowda Government is sticking its neck out to ensure that he is not arrested in any of the cases registered against him go to show that his clout is intact still.

What is of significance, though, is that the conduct of a former Prime Minister has come under some intense scrutiny and he is being brought before the bar of justice to answer for his deeds and misdeeds.

His reign as President of the Congress marks an all time low in the history of the party which itself has seen its image plummeting remorselessly since Independence, more so since the days of the late Mrs Gandhi.

He had not sought a ticket for the 1991 elections and was preparing to retire from public life when fate intervened in the shape of the human bomb Dhaau in Sri Perumbudur. With Mrs Sonia Gandhi refusing to step into the breach left behind by her assassinated husband, the Congress old guards pulled Rao back to the limelight and made him head the organisation. The expectation of the various regional sataraps at that time was

that since Rao had no mass base worth speaking of, he would remain a titular head and be content to do so. As in the case of Mrs Gandhi in the past, the senior leaders found themselves outmanoeuvred again.

Though at the time he was sworn in as the Prime Minister in 1991, the Congress did not enjoy an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha - it could survive in power only thanks to support from the left parties - he went on to engineer splits in other parties and finally ended up with a comfortable majority. The other leaders were suitably impressed and he came to acquire complete command over the party - why should anyone quarrel when the leader could provide his followers enough opportunity to pile up money left, right and centre?

From stock market to sugar import to telecom to urea, the Rao regime simply reeked of corruption to an unprecedented level but there was little dissent since everyone was having his share of the loot, and so merrily Rao could invalidate the results of the duly held polls to the policy-making bodies of the party, stall elections at lower levels indefinitely, nominate his own henchmen for important positions and in one word, run the party like his personal fiefdom with little resistance a la the Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi.

Then the Congress kept getting mauled in elections after elections in various states during his tenure and there was a split when Mr Arjun Singh and company walked out. Still Rao continued to wield his power because his rivals did not have any charismatic leader among themselves.

Even after the humiliating debacle in the general elections, Rao continued to call the shots because the MP's could trust only Rao to get them back to positions of power or win favours from the UF government.

But then came the stunning disclosures about the mind-boggling Rs.133 crore urea import scam and the recovery of over three crores of rupees from the residences of former Communications Minister and a Rao confidant, Sukh Ram followed by the allegation by the pickles tycoon Lakhubhai Pathak that Chandraswamy had diddled him to the tune of one hundred thousand dollars and that Rao himself was a party to the deal and there was this charge that the MP's

although I know my life is in danger", she says.

Could modern values re-emerge soon, I ask. "In April 1978 we had 50 per cent of hope", she said. "The PDPA had a new ideology. Unfortunately it began with bloodshed, and what starts that way doesn't bear fruit. Then came 15 years of war, which left two generations of children without proper schooling. Unfortunately it has kept the people ignorant.

"We are worse off today than in 1978", she concludes. "We expect more calamities to come".

(Courtesy of The Guardian, 9.10.96)

(contd on next page)

Take a litre of water and add a spot of citrus juice, some chemicals and a fistful of herbs. Stir the mixture well and boil the same. Presto! 600cc of mineral oil, you can call it gasoline, floats to the top! Ponnaiah Ramar Pillai, a diminutive villager from a remote hamlet, Mamsa-puram, in the Kamaraj district in southern Tamil Nadu has sent the entire country into a tizzy with what looks like a revolutionary, epoch-making discovery. There are many unanswered questions about the whole process and by the time this piece was written some had even started calling Ramar a big hoax. Still the miracle remains a distinct possibility and the entire nation is excited - after all Ramar's discovery has fascinating implications for the world economy itself.

Ramar comes of a very poor family and is in his early thirties. He discontinued his schooling midway because of poverty and he had tried his hand in many jobs including vending door-to-door sukku coffee (a coffee-like concoction from spices and popular among the poorer sections) on the streets and picking up firewood. He also got married along the way and had two children. Life was indeed tough for Ramar, but through it all he persisted with his experiments to obtain petrol from herbs.

His wife told this correspondent: "Those days he would return home ex-

(contd. from page 32)

of a minor party from Bihar had been heavily bribed into voting down a no-confidence motion against the Rao Government in 1992 and when a magistrate finally made Rao co-accused in the Lakhubhai Pathak case and directed him to appear before it, but succeeded in installing a known supporter as his successor and also remaining as the leader of the CPP.

Besides he could get the Deve Gowda Government direct the CBI not to oppose his bail application and make the Delhi police stall the trial itself on the ground that Rao's personal security could not be ensured if the trial was to be held in open courts.

Meantime the Supreme Court itself has granted an injunction against the Magistrate's order requiring Rao's personal appearance in the Pathak case. A furious debate is now raging over the ruling - whether it is proper to treat Rao on a footing different from that of any other ordinary citizens and whether the courts are justified in taking the view that the very institution of the Prime Minister would be compromised if a former Prime Minister went to jail and so the show goes on and Rao is still evading the long arm of the law. ●

HERBAL FUEL FROM TAMIL NADU HAS NATION IN A TIZZY

T N Gopalan

hausted, but he won't take rest. Many a time he would sit through the night burning the leaves, preparing some paste and so on when we would be asleep. A portion of our hut had been turned into his laboratory. It was a no-go zone for me and my children..."

Like the apple in the case of Newton, for Ramar it all had happened during a picnic when an unextinguished beedi fell on a leaf and it caught fire. If leaves could catch fire there should be some fuel potential in them and which could be extracted through some form or other, he surmised and vowed to himself to identify the leaves and discover the process which could coax fuel out of them. At one time he was stuck for want of necessary resources to carry on. "When feeding so many months, my aged parents, wife, two children and myself was itself such a daunting task, where to go for the money to carry on my research," Ramar reminisces.

And then he came into contact with a neighbouring hamlet Idayankulam, who took a keen interest in Ramar's research and promised to pack him up. He became more or less an adopted son of his patron Yamaiah who set up a mini-lab on a patch of land and purchased some rudimentary equipment too. Besides Yamaiah gave Ramar's family some money for their maintenance. His daughter Poongani threw herself heart and soul into Ramar's experiments and nearly a decade since he had seen the beedi lighting a leaf Ramar finally hit upon the formula which could turn water into gasoline.

Still frustrations and disappointments were to dog him for a while. But thanks to intervention from some Christian friends (incidentally Ramar is a Christian though this part of it is slightly mysterious) the discovery was taken to the notice of the Prime Minister's office a couple of months ago.

Then he was invited over to New Delhi where he successfully demonstrated his process. The Department of Science and Technology was so overwhelmed that it swung into action immediately, writing to the Government of Tamil Nadu to help Ramar set up a mini-plant in the village to manufacture 300 litres of herbal fuel a day. It also set in motion the necessary process for getting a patent for Ramar's discovery.

Still questions remained - to quote Dr V Ganesan, a professor in the Indian Institute of Technology and who was one of the first to test Ramar's invention, "To my scientific mind such an experiment seemed heavenly impossible, defying as it did Chemistry and Thermodynamics. What is the source of carbon necessary to make the Hydrocarbon?" Besides the carbon content of the output was much more than that of the input, thus violating the known physical laws governing mass.

Ramar himself could not explain because he was not highly educated nor reveal his secrets for obvious reasons.

But the DST was willing to give him the benefit of the doubt and help him perfect the process. Meantime the entire nation went gaga over the Ramar effect and he became a celebrity. Journalists from all over the country and from the BBC too started queueing up before Ramaiah's residence in Idanyankulam.

Even as he and Poongani were basking in their newfound glory and various organisations vied with each other in conferring honours upon them, Ramar's wife started throwing hints that she was being deliberately ignored and that her husband was in the thrall of the Ramaiahs. Some others who had helped him in the early days charged that he was kicking away the ladder he had used to climb to success.

Then came yet another setback. He could not produce a drop of petrol during the second validation test at Madras. And worse some of the scientists suspected that he was indulging in some foul play. Predictably many Tamil Nadu politicians jumped into the fray finding fault with the scientists themselves and demanding that he be granted the patent forthwith. And that clown of a politician Kumari Ananthan, President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee went to the extent of calling upon the DMK and TMC ministers in the union cabinet to resign in protest!

An enraged Ramar himself charged the DST with jealousy and bias. Then the very same DST which had been so effusive earlier retaliated with some more damning evidence like how Ramar's fuel resembled processed petroleum products available in the market rather than crude oil and how he had

(contd on next page)

AFGHANISTAN FALLS TO FUNDAMENTALISTS

T N Gopalan

The Taliban entered Kabul in the small hours of 27 September and immediately imposed a complete Islamic rule in Afghanistan, sending shock waves all over the globe.

The Taliban, meaning students in Pushtu are the most dreaded Islamic group to have hit the mankind in recent times.

The fly-blown bodies of former President Najibullah and his brother left rotting in the streets of Kabul for days after they were abducted from the premises of the United Nations and hanged and also denied even a decent burial, did go to testify to the sheer brutality and insensitivity of the new regime in Afghanistan.

India, China, Iran in particular and the world in general would now have to contend with a most volatile and a most intractable player in their midst. To hark back to that most contemptible term invented by that notorious gendarme of international law and order, the US, Afghanistan under the Taliban are going to prove to be the 'roguest' of all the countries on this earth at this juncture.

Pakistan which is generally credited with fathering and nurturing the Taliban militia and should be enjoying hugely the sweet and stunning successes of its protégé. Especially for the beleaguered regime of Benazir Bhutto the Taliban's success break-through could come as a much-needed breather and relief. That the ordinary Pakistani would continue to

groan under the corrupt, callous and inefficient rule of the ruling elite is a different story altogether.

For its part the US too should be savouring the moment for it had consistently encouraged the Taliban, directly and indirectly. And so when it comes to this part of Asia, its much vaunted concern over the terrorism and commitment to human rights seem to disappear into thin air - the need of the hour is "stability in the region."

Spread over an area of 652,090 sq km and ribbed and girdled by majestic mountains, Afghanistan is considered the hinge of Asia. On it pivots the gateway to India through the Khyber Pass and the backdoor to Russia. From Darius in 548-486 BC to Alexander to Genghis Khan to Tamerlane to the British who fought three times to maintain their hold on the Khyber Pass and finally to the Soviet troops which rushed in avowedly to shore up a weak Marxist regime in 1979, the poor country has continued to reel under the relentless pummelling from the outside forces. It was never given much of a chance.

Though the Pathans are the largest ethnic group, Tajiks, Turkmen, Uzbeks, Baluchis and a host of other minor communities are also found among the 15 million plus population while the Pathans or the Pushtuns are indigenous to Afghanistan, the other groupings are a legacy of the successive waves of invading armies.

Though the society is characterised by the unending tribal rivalries and a fiercely independent spirit, the inevitable by-products of the historical processes and geographical situation, the cementing factor has been Islam. Almost all of them are passionate Muslims. None of these factors was taken into account when the then Brezhnev regime in Moscow decided on invading the country and propping up a floundering Marxist Government.

When five years earlier monarchy had been abolished and a radical government led by Mohammed Daud assumed power, it had all looked unreal. The social and economic revolution planned looked simply out of place in a country languishing in pre-capitalist mode of production. The apprehensions of the sympathetic observers were only proved right by the bloody coups, internecine wars, cynical games played by

US and Pakistan and the colossal human misery which all were the inevitable consequences of the revolutionary project and the Russian intervention. More than three million Afghans were displaced and the refugee inflow had serious impact on Pakistan.

The flourishing arms bazaar, narcotics trade mushrooming Mujahideen groups and carpet bombing destroyed the civil society for good. It was a fierce all-out war, first against the soviet army and then among themselves.

The Pak rulers have benefitted time and again by the developments in Afghanistan. When General Zia Ul Huq had gained international notoriety consequent on the hanging of deposed premier Z A Bhutto, the soviet invasion turned the tide remarkably in his favour with the US pumping in money and arms and setting up Pak as one of its cherished sentinels against the marauding communists.

And now the Taliban's victory should come as a shot in the arm for the tottering regime of the late Bhutto's daughter.

Neither the US nor Pak in their cynical pursuit of power ever took into account the incalculable danger in spawning or propping up close-minded and highly fanatical guerrilla groups - both the Pakistanis and Afghans are still paying for the sins of their leaders in terms of lost lives and limbs missed economic opportunities and social fabric.

The one-eyed and one-legged Mullah Mohammad Omar, the Chief of the Taliban, hailing from the Kandahar province is really an awe-inspiring figure. He had fought in the Jihad in the eighties, but disgusted by the corruption and infighting among the Mujahideens, he called it quits and went back to his teaching job in a religious school. When he organised his students to fight the excesses of the Mujahideen commanders the Taliban was born, some time in late 1994.

Finding the groups which captured power in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the Soviet army not very amenable to its own regional ambitions, Pak went all out supporting the Taliban. In less than 24 months the students-turned-warriors were able to capture 17 provinces in Afghanistan.

While the UN did talk of bringing the war between the Taliban and the Kabul-based coalition to an end, the US-Pak axis silently worked to undermine the coalition and strengthen the Taliban. At one time the US sent its representative to Kabul asking the Rabbani government to hand over power to the Taliban.

Now when other countries like In-
(contd. on next page)

(contd. from page 33)

surreptitiously sought to introduce some kerosene-like substance into the mixture during the second experiment and so on.

However, the last word has not yet been said. In fact the odds are that Ramar had stumbled upon some magic formula for he has nothing to gain by taking the DST for a ride. Momentary glory is not what he is after but he is seeking a viable route to cheap petrol which could not only earn him international laurels but also dollars in undreamt of quantities. He remains unfazed and vows to prove his claims and make petrol production almost a cottage industry. And for once the Tamil press is devoting more space and time to such issues as economy and energy, pushing the Jayalalithas of the society to the back pages. Some welcome development that.

These days in India, you love much of the country on small or big screens. Doordarshan and Indian films, especially Tamil films, swamp you with fantastic expressions of you loving the nation, its cricket success, packaged diversity of tourism and dance. Your young schoolboys and girls sing simple ad jingles to the tune of A R Rahman tuned in Ragas Kapi or Desh, praising the Indian nation and its uncompromising and consensual desire for a nuclear phallus made in Geneva (on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty).

Kashmir, television serials and spot ads tell you, is nothing but a phony narrative of family love, simple war, trust and betrayal, like the successful Tamil film Roja directed by Mani Ratnam. A musical promotional ad before the Kashmir elections shows the Indian army as the custodian of arms, gladly accepting the surrender of Kashmiri youth. The film, Bandit Queen, determines the electoral fortunes and media bluster of the once-bandit Phoolan Devi(1). And so on. India's resentful and vengeful rebel hero of the 70's, Amitabh Bachchan, like the Gibreel Farishtha of Salman Rushdie's life-destroying novel, fancies himself as an NRI out to sell his image. He is now not big A or big B, which might remind you respectively of Allahabad which he represented in the Lok Sabha or the Bofors gun payoffs, but simply AB, or Aby Baby. AB is pitching himself high, produc-

(contd. from page 34)

dia, Russia and Iran are panicking, the US and Pakistan are gloating over their triumph.

The Russians are worried that the war being waged by the Islamic guerrillas in the central Asian republic of Tajikistan would now intensify and spill over into their own territory. To quote Mr Pavel Felgengauer, a defence commentator, "Russia does not have enough troops in Tajikistan to defend its border. The local Tajik army can control the border with Afghanistan only as long as it is confronted by the Tajik rebels ... but if the Taliban proclaims a new Jihad, there is no way Tajikistan can be defended ... The non-religious authoritarian regimes (in Central Asia) lack internal stability ... under a worst case scenario, Russia will have to leave Central Asia."

India which has just held assembly elections in Kashmir and believes it has quelled militancy to some extent is shocked at the fall of Kabul. The infiltration of Pak-trained militants and also foreign mercenaries which had been con-

BLUSTER AND FOLLY OF THE INDIAN SCREEN-NATION

by G.Ramesh

ing 14 films including Ulhasam, a love story shot in Germany by two young, ardent Tamil small magazine litterateurs (Beware, Professor Sivasegaram, of any lofty notions about creative Tamil writing!).

And, Oops, Aby Baby, you learn is also going to host the first ever Miss India Contest on Indian soil this December. Where, you may be tempted to ask? where else, but in Bangalore, the very soil of the Prime Ministerial farmer with aeroplane-flying liquor links. Aby Baby is very much a democrat, you know. He is keen on inviting protesting feminists, for a dialogue under the Pizza Hut with fried Kentucky chicken on hand. Aby Baby also arranges, in his sprawling Mumbai Juhu residence, nocturnal visits of India's Prime Ministers to enquire about the health-status of his fossilised poet-father. Wasn't his family always close to that of India's first Prime Minister? In Aby's residence, the Prime Minister, a humble farmer always thinking of how to solve drinking water problems of poor villagers, accidentally thinks out a way to come across Bal Thackeray, whose flashy

car-driving nephews are involved in the profession of casually explaining away mystery deaths of hard-to-evict poor tenants like Ramesh Kini in faraway cinema halls.

Can Madras, oops, Chennai, be far behind Mumbai? The city has Madras-based industrialists like Ashwin Muthiah genuinely wanting to start research centres on Saiva Siddhanta and barristers like Karthik Chidambaram, the tennis-playing Cambridge-trained-son of the present-day Union Finance Minister. Mr Chidambaram Karthik is getting married to one of the most accomplished Bharatanatyam dancers of Tamil Nadu (carrying on the legacy of Justice Party leader R K Shanmugam Chettiar's relationship to the famous danseuse Balasaraswathi). Thus, you can start research on a life-style of which you have become the opposite and can have a happy married life with a person who is an image of a tradition or lifestyle which you adore. Sometimes, the image is something which is not even a photograph. You hear of videographs, which are like ad films, being exchanged among parents of brides and grooms via matrimonial columns of The Hindu.

Mamallapuram, the rock-cut wonder, or the Dharasuram or the Brahadeeswar temples in Thanjavur District, were just backdrops for film shooting. These have been replaced by the mock-sculpture of the V G Panneerdas Golden Beach at Injambakkam, the dream setting in many Tamil films. The fake will suffice, you don't have to see the real one. The image has killed the real and the real has gone out of existence.

Talking of Tamil films, they seem to have taken the lead. Be it Roja, where a computer-cryptographer douses a burning national flag by falling across it; Bombay, which seeks to gloss over deeper social divisions by wallowing in pulp secularism; or the recent Indian, which sees Kamalhassan become an impatient self-righteous neurotic old vigilante killing sundry tahsildars with his kungfu-like varmakalai (origins: Southern Tamil Nadu, destination: China

tained to some extent is sure to resume with renewed vengeance. Anyway the militants in the valley on the retreat for some time now would now regroup and unleash more offensives.

Iran which had backed the Kabul coalition is angry and could be trusted to offer refuge to the deposed leaders and rearm them for another round of war with the Taliban.

For the benighted people of Afghans themselves there will be no relief. As mentioned earlier the very minute they captured power the Taliban proclaimed a terrifying Islamic rule - from lashes to women not under the veil to amputation of thieves to closing down of schools for women to ban on their going for any job whatsoever. Afghanistan is going to witness a mindless throwback to the middle ages. The Marxist rule had sought to violently push a feudal society into modern times. On the rebound the Afghans are now going to repudiate even the little gains they had made since the fifties. The entire humanity will be the worse for it.

and Japan). He ends up as an Aussie NRI after killing his own corrupt son, also played by him. The Hindi films have only followed suit: 1942: A Love Story, released a few years ago, pathetically tries to draw upon the mystique of the Quit India Movement. And realistic Malayalam is not far behind, with the genial Mohanlal becoming a tough revolutionary doctor in Kalapaani. He is imprisoned by the British in the Andaman cellular jail along with freedom fighters from other parts of India. You listen to Ilayaraja's fake Bach piano/violin numbers while gazing/gaping at lifeless corpses hanging from the dreaded jail's walls.

These films have stopped making you puke. They evoke the nausea after puking. You need a lemon to scratch your tongue and head after seeing them. They seem to have something to tell you about the modern Indian dream or its abject failure. The dream has not only gone sour; you have forgotten the element of sweetness; and also that you have chosen to take the sourness for sweetness. Offering impossible solutions, the films first indicate the existence of intractable problems and seek to trivialize and nullify them. Ultimately, they offer the only surviving perverted frameworks to look at our failures at the mass level.

Gandhi has been canned, first by the British Attenborough and now by Shyam Benegal, who is meditating on the apprenticeship of the Mahatma in Ahimsa and Satyagraha, South Africa. His film, Making of the Mahatma, shot this year, has been released on the Gandhi Jayanthi day. Both films indirectly indicate what India has not been. Of what India has become, Raj Kapoor, one of the doyens of the truly-popular cinema of the 1950's, seems to have had the right idea. In one of his films Shree 420, he plays the role of a hero, a sophisticated cheat and a forger. He stands reformed by Nargis, the heroine. You see, he realised the fickleness of the modern Indian dream. A man who has been Prime Minister has now been charge-sheeted for cheating (Section 420 of the IPC) in the 100,000 Us \$ case involving Lakkubhai Pathak, the typical London-based Gujarathi pickle-king (what a stereotype!) and forgery in the St Kitts case. He has also been named in a case registered in connection with the bribing of subaltern-tribal Jharkhand Mukti Morcha Members of Parliament to keep his Government

ON THE STATUS OF TAMIL: A REJOINDER

by G.Ramesh

I read with interest Professor Sivasegaram's comments (15 September issue) on my article on the status of Tamil in present-day Tamil Nadu (15 August issue). Following are my comments:

1 I celebrate diglossia (in fact heteroglossia) of languages including Tamil just as he does. I have stated in my article that all languages of the subcontinent are diglossic, except Sanskrit. Sanskrit was not meant to be diglossic.

The major difference between Tamil and some other languages of the subcontinent is the manner in which their classical modes have paralleled Sanskrit down the ages. While several languages had modelled their classical modes of existence after Sanskrit, Tamil poets and linguistic commentators evolved a unique classical mode for our language. This is the stuff of the much-touted classical heritage of Tamil. In recent times, this heritage was packaged and sold to the people of Tamil Nadu for political purposes. This violent activity in the public sphere has undermined the potential of the creative space enunciated in classical Tamil. Consequently, many modernist writers, with the exception of Subramania Bharathi and a few dissenters like Pudumaipittan, generally shunned the creative potential of classical Tamil. The

going during the last five years.

Both cases indicate a fictional existence, for P V Narasimha Rao worse than fifth-rate English thrillers, involving Godman Chandra Swamy and his aide Kailash Nath Aggarwal alias Mamaji (what a nickname!). The media revels in exhibiting these cases, while Narasimha Rao remains unarrested until date, his accomplices like Chandra Swamy and Mamaji have been jailed. You wonder why the JMM MP's who took the bribes are in jail since the bribe-givers have gone Scot free so far. The entire Indian External Affairs and Finance Ministry establishment comes up as a set of bungling forgers. A poor Tamil film is due on this. And both you and me might not have the patience to see it notching up success at the box-office.

present-day little magazine tradition of Tamil Nadu, which has been recently celebrated by Sivasegaram in your columns, avoids this issue altogether. A few poets like Gnanakoothan and Vikramadityan are exceptions to this trend.

2. Sanskrit, at any rate, did not remain fossilised as easily claimed by Sivasegaram. His penchant for political correctness is very much understandable! However, history proves that the situation was otherwise. Sanskrit, as I have stated, was not meant to be a language with diglossia. Sanskrit, as it is known, means language classicised. It was meant to draw upon some robust popular modes of the subcontinent's languages for its sustenance. That it did so for many centuries is unquestionable. Its success and fading out are still puzzles unsolved. That an illiterate goat-herd like Kalidasa went on to produce the greatest of Sanskrit literature remains a key puzzle for literary historians. George L Hart, as I had stated in my article, has shown that Kalidasa's poetry drew heavily from Dravidian elements via the Maharashtrian sattasai poetry. This solves only one part of the puzzle.

3. That linguistic life in the subcontinent will continue to oscillate between classical and popular modes is again borne out by history. For instance, Arabic-Persian, which first replaced Sanskrit as a classical language, decisively contributed to the birth and development of modern Hindustani, which has two scripts, Devanagari and Urdu.

Somehow Sivasegaram seems to labour under the illusion that all popular modes of Tamil could one day be brought under the umbrella of standardised Tamil. Standardisation and classicisation are completely different processes. In the best of contexts, the two can relate to each other. Classicisation is necessarily a creative process; standardisation need not be so.

No amount of standardisation of languages and corrections of spellings will change the ground-level situation of diglossia in the subcontinent. Even in Malayalam and Sinhala, cited by Sivasegaram, the situation obtained is similar. The problem is about linguistics.

tic situation per se and not the instrumental use of institutions like the media by elitists or subalterns.

My argument is that the attempt to standardise Tamil language in the public sphere is at the expense of its popular dialects (and their creative spaces) as well as the creative potential enshrined in classical Tamil. The attempt to standardise Tamil is paralleled by the emergence of a mass Tamil which has strangled popular linguistic/literary creativity. At any rate, this has been the experience of Tamil Nadu in the last few decades.

4. My comparison of English and Sanskrit is in the context of their roles, in the present and past subcontinent, respectively. I must admit that I was not referring to English in Britain or Australia or the United States or South Africa. English may be diglossic elsewhere, but what is it in India and the rest of the subcontinent. Does English at all have a popular existence in India? If so, what is it? In other words, when a subcontinental person says something in English rather than in a native language, the fact that it is in English adds something to its content. Or bluntly: what does English mean in the subcontinent, which the subcontinent's own languages do not? The answer to these difficult questions are explored in a recent book called *The Otherness of English: India's Auntie-Tongue Syndrome* (by Probal Dasgupta, Sage Publications, 1993).

In this book, Dasgupta makes the point that while Sanskrit in ancient India learnt from the popular modes of other languages as it was meant to, English in contemporary India is trapped within a teaching social mould. The exception to this trend may be happening when India is written about as English literature by R K Narayan, Salman Rushdie or Amitav Ghosh!

5. Sivasegaram's derisive comment on my alleged contempt for convent drop-outs is misplaced. I have a lot of empathy for dropouts from both government-run and convent schools. I myself am a dropout from a particular successful professional career. My point was that one's ability to speak fluent English should not be construed as the person's knowledge or capacity. The mass media of Tamil Nadu is guilty of pandering to this myth in the case of Jayalalitha. Sivasegaram should realise that she became the Tamil mass media's mythical knowl-

edgeable Auntie!

6. Sivasegaram says I am suffering from a misplaced pessimism. Being neither pessimistic nor optimistic, I am performing the serious task of describing an extraordinary linguistic situation obtaining in contemporary Tamil Nadu.

7. Sivasegaram is wrong in saying that the Singapore scholar's Tamil software contribution uses Roman characters. I have clearly stated that it uses Tamil consonants and vowels. One needs to punch twice in the keyboard, the appropriate uyir and mey letters to get a Tamil character like KI or SO. Tamil typists will have to get ready for this change. The Tamil typewriter had been built for a mechanical design. One can make use of an electronic design, which includes the features of the Tamil alphabet, to build the new Tamil keyboard. This is what Professor N Govindaswamy, the Singapore-based scholar, has done. He has taken the idea, not from "our Western masters" but from the keyboard design of Chinese which has over 2,000 characters.

8. Lastly, Professor Sivasegaram knows me through my Tamil pseudonym, Nagarjunan, and my literary and

cultural criticism which operates at the sphere of little magazine tradition celebrated by Sivasegaram. However, having worked in this for more than a decade and a half, I would say that the literature produced by Tamil Nadu this century has seen very few innovators at the level of Bharati, Pudumaipittan, Mouni and Nakulan. Tamil literature needs more and not less of such writers working with cosmic forms of language. The contemporary crop of writers including those celebrated by Sivasegaram are either excessively concerned with the public sphere or happen to be followers of these three path breakers. Sivasegaram should not get shocked, but let me inform him that the latest folly of Tamil writers, including those celebrated by him, is to produce short stories, in Doordarshan, based on various ornaments for a famous Colombo and Madras-based jewellery house. Each writer will produce a story for an ornament specified by the owner of the jewellery house.

9. I am willing to be proved wrong, but only in the course of a long debate for which I offer Sivasegaram the columns of the Tamil quarterly Vidh yasam edited by us.

Koreans in the Vanguard of Investment in Lanka

South Korean business executives who built an economic powerhouse from the ashes of the Korean War are now in the vanguard of foreign investment in war-torn Sri Lanka, a recent Reuters report stated quoting Colombo.

Wansasiri Abeywickrema, a manager at the state Board of Investment, said Japan, Korea and Singapore were Sri Lanka's top targets in a drive to attract foreign investors to Sri Lanka, whose economy has been hit hard by prolonged ethnic war.

But South Koreans seemed less worried by the Sri Lankan conflict than some other potential investors. "Japanese are very scared by the internal conflict but Koreans appeared used to a difficult and dangerous life," he said in an interview.

A total of 145 South Korean investment projects totalling 12 billion rupees (\$218 million) were under way or awaiting implementation in Sri Lanka, the board said. The figure did not include expansion after initial investment.

"The Koreans are the most active investors here," Abeywickrema said. Korean projects are in the manufacturing sector which creates many jobs, unlike investment by Singapore which focuses on the real estate and service sectors, he said.

In the latest South Korean investment foray, Korea Heavy Industries and Construction Co said it was negotiating with Sri Lanka to invest a total of \$650 million in steel, power generation and oil refinery projects. If imple-

mented, it will be the largest ever investment by a single foreign investor in the island.

Korea Heavy executive managing director Shin Sang-hong told Reuters he was confident his company would win a 90 percent stake in Ceylon Steel Corp being privatised by Sri Lanka. "If we take over Ceylon Steel, we will upgrade capacity first but our major investment in steel production will be in the form of a new mill near a harbour," Shin said after visiting Sri Lanka recently to explore investment opportunities. Ceylon Steel's plant is inland.

Shin said the state South Korean company tentatively planned to spend a total of \$150 million on steel projects in Sri Lanka and hoped to build power plants at a cost of \$150 million and an oil refinery at a cost of \$350 million.

"We see oil refining as a promising business in Sri Lanka which is short of supply in petroleum products," he said.

Military service in South Korea - still technically at war with the North since their 1950-53 conflict - helps steel South Koreans against the fear of warfare and hones their business acumen, business leaders say. "All Korean men must serve in the military for more than two years and they have naturally become used to war and probably get aggressive in their business practices as well," said South Korean executive Kang Dong-hyun, whose Kabool Textiles has spent \$100 million on a factory in the island.

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MATRIMONIAL

Jaffna Hindu uncle seeks partner for widowed niece, beautiful, fair, 31, British citizen, professionally well qualified in permanent employment, mars afflicted. Send horoscope, details. M 885 c/o Tamil Times.

Lankan Tamil parents seek attractive, well educated partner preferably living in USA for their son, 29, civil engineer with Masters degree and working in USA. Religion immaterial. Send details. M 886 c/o Tamil Times.

Hindu parents seek professional bride for engineer son, M.Sc., 26, 5'9" employed in US. Details and photo to P.O.Box 21006, Columbus, OH 43221, USA.

Hindu professional parents seek partners for sons, the doctor, 26, 5'8" and the financial analyst who prefers a doctor, dentist is 25, 5'8". Both employed in US. Send horoscope, details to P.O.Box 21006, Columbus OH 43221, USA.

Tamil Christian brother seeks professional doctor groom below 35 in UK/Australia for qualified accountant sister, 28, working in UK. Hindu with no mars afflictions considered. M 889 c/o Tamil Times.

British Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional doctor groom for their British qualified doctor daughter, 29, with own house and working in UK. Send photo, details. M 890 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu doctor uncle seeks partner under 30 for nephew, 35, 6', Canadian resident with business interests. M 891 c/o Tamil Times.

Brother seeks educated bride preferably early thirties, Tamil Catholic for ACA, ACMA, Sri-lankan, employed in Australia, 39, tall, non-smoker, teetotal. Send full particulars and recent photograph (returnable). M 892 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu mother seeks professional partner for fair daughter, 37, partly qualified accountant, Mars afflicted, in employment in London. Send horoscope, details. M 893 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional groom for fair attractive, Biochemistry graduate daughter, 25, in good UK employment, Mars afflicted. Send horoscope, details. M 894 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna parents, permanently resident UK seek partner preferably medical doctor, 27-30, for fair, beautiful daughter, 26, 5'4", London medicinal chemistry graduate registered for M.Sc. Send horoscope, details, recent photograph (returnable). M 895 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu professional brother in UK seeks professional/part qualified groom under 39, for very fair, slim sister, 30, teacher in Colombo. Send horoscope, details M 896 c/o Tamil Times.

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Suresh son of Mr. & Mrs. Sivagnanam of 29 Crescent Way, Brockley, London SE4 and Susanne daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joseph of 6 Barloch House, Henley Street, Battersea, London SW11 on 28th September '96 at the Civic Suite, Wandsworth Town Hall, London SW18.

Dano son of Mr. & Mrs. V. Sinnadurai of 101/1 Hunupitiya Lake Road, off Ramanayake Mawatha, Colombo 2 and Cynthiya daughter of Mr. & Mrs. S. Jeevachandran, 24/1 1A/1 Aponso Avenue, Dehiwela on 28.9.96 at Holy Trinity Church, Wellawatte, Colombo 6.

OBITUARIES



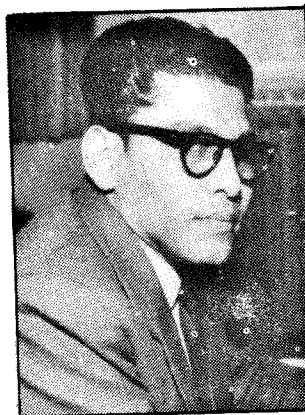
Mrs. Luximpillai Sinnathurai (86), beloved wife of the late

Mr. Sinnathamy Sinnathurai (Pariyari, Thambachetty, Pt. Pedro) loving mother of Karunanantham (Colliers Wood), Mrs. Karuneswari Ratnasingham (Wimbledon), Mrs. Indrani Velautham (New Malden), Sarvanandam (Morden), Sathanandam (Wimbledon) and Satchithanandam (Alvai, Sri Lanka); mother-in-law of Rajalaxmi, A.T.S. Ratnasingham, A.T.S. Velautham, Sashikala, Helen and Ranji; grandmother of Jayanthan, Geetha, Latha, Ranjit, Arun, Janakan, Janani, Premala, Kelly, Mandy, Prema, Loga passed away in London on 25th September and was cremated on 1st October 1996.

The members of the family thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and assisted them in several ways during the period of great sorrow. - 12 Valley Road, London SW19. Tel: 0181 543 0378; 178 Queens Road, London SW19. Tel: 0181 946 1140; 46 Albert Road, New Malden, Surrey. Tel: 0181 336 1439.

IN MEMORIAM

Lovingly remembered and very much missed on the 7th anniversary of the passing away of



Daniel Selvarajah Sanders, Ph.D., ACSW

Sept. 28, 1928 - Oct. 14, 1989
The Sixth Annual Daniel S. Sanders Peace and Justice Lecture

Internationally known as a leader in efforts to achieve world peace, human rights and social justice, Daniel S. Sanders was DEAN, Professor and Director of International Program at the University of Hawaii School of Social Work, USA from 1971-1986.

Dean, Professor and Director for the Center for the Study of International Social Welfare Policies and Services, University of Illinois, Urbana-

Champaign, School of Social Work from 1986-1989.

Founder and first President, Inter-University Consortium for International Social Development (IUCISD) 1980-1989.

President UNA-USA Hawaii Chapter 1983-1986. Dan received the Peace Award by the United Nations in the International Year of Peace for the IUCISD in 1985.

Dan's last presentation on 'The Role of the Universities in Peace and Social Development' was at the International Conference on Mass Media in a Time of Crisis and Our Common Future in Vasteras, Sweden, September 1989. The article was published in **The Journal of Social Development in Africa** Vol. 9, No. 1, 1994, University of Zimbabwe, Editor, Professor Nigel Hall.

The sixth annual Daniel S. Sanders Peace and Justice Lecture was given by Professor Richard Estes from the University of Pennsylvania on 'The World Social Development and Peace' in March 1996 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign followed by spontaneous questions from the audience.

The fourth biennial Daniel S. Sanders Peace and Justice Lecture was given by Dr. Harriet Jacobson, UN Consultant and Prof. University of Orebro, Sweden on 'Children in War Times' in July 1996 at the IUCISD Conference in Oporto, Portugal. The lecture was translated in Portuguese. Dr. Jacobsson received a standing ovation for the very stimulating lecture.

With much love to Rajan, Mrs. Christobel Chelvathy Sanders, Sanders/Niles families, Selvaranee, Chandrannee. Chandran & Mangai, Balan & Susila; Ariam & Sushila, Alagan & Thavayogam, nieces and nephews. - 1807 Vancouver Place, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96822, USA.



In loving memory of **Mr. Edward F. Xavier** on the first

anniversary of his passing away on 27th October 1995.

A year has gone by since the day you left us. It was a sudden parting. Too bitter to forget. This lonely year without you is the hardest we have known. They say that time is a good healer, but neither time nor the reason will change the way we feel. Your love, your gentle care and the strength you gave us is what we miss each day. But the precious memories linger on and shall be with us for ever.

Fondly remembered by your loving wife (Ranee), son (Frank), daughter (Davina), sister, family and friends. - 18, Woodchurch Road, West Hampstead, London NW6.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

October 27 6.00pm News-media International Ltd presents Sangamam - A Musical Extravaganza by Mrs. Malini Thanabalasingam - Veena, Mrs. Thanathevi Mithradeva - Violin and Mr. Gnanavarathan Pichayappa - Flute accompanied by Karaikudi Mr. R. Krishnamurthy - Mridangam, Mr.

Baskaran Srikaram - Ghatam and Mr. Muthu Sivarajah - Khanjira at Greenford Hall, Ruislip Road, Greenford, Middx. Tel: 0181 933 3498/426 1677.

November 1 Iypasi Velli 3; All Saints' Day.

Nov. 2 All Souls' Day.

Nov. 2 7.00pm Chundikuli - St. John's Past Pupils' Association (UK) A.G.M., Dinner, Dance at Ealing Town Hall, New Broadway, London W5 2BL. Tel: 01737 357 424.

Nov. 3 12noon - 3.30pm Medical Seminar organised by Tamil Association of Brent at Alperton Community School, Ealing Road, Wembley, Middx. Tel: 0181 908 6993.

Nov. 3 6.00pm London Sivan Temple presents Dance Drama 'Rajendra Cholan' produced by the famous Indian Archaeologist Dr. Nagaswamy at The Great Hall, Goldsmith College, Lewisham Way, New Cross, London SE14 6NW. Tel: 0181 318 9844/690 0401.

Nov. 6 Krishna Ekathasi.

Nov. 8 Pirathosam; Iypasi Velli 4.

Nov. 10 Deepavali; Amma-vasai.

Nov. 11 Skandashashti Viratham starts; Feast of St. Martin.

Nov. 14 Chathurthi.

Nov. 15 Iypasi Velli 5.

Nov. 16 Soora Samharam; Feast of St. Edmund.

Nov. 17 Thirukkalyanam.

Nov. 17 12noon Skanda Varodaya College Old Students' Association (UK) 11th Annual Reunion Lunch, A.G.M. and Variety Entertainment. Tel: 0181 644 0972/769 4855/651 6129.

Nov. 21 Ekathasi.

Nov. 22 Pirathosam; Feast of St. Cecilia.

Nov. 23 6.00pm Jaffna College Alumni Association (UK) A.G.M., Dinner, Dance at Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, London W4. Tel: 01234 854355.

Nov. 23 6.30pm S.C.O.T. presents exclusive Vocal Recital in London by Sri T.V. Sankaranarayanan, most acclaimed vocalist from India accompanied by Sri P. Sunder Rajan on Violin

and Sri Srimushnam V. Raja Rao on Mirudangam at A.D.T. College Main Hall, 100 West Hill (A3), Putney SW15 2UT. (Entrance via Portinscale Road), Nearest Tube: East Putney. Tel: 0181 693 4088/870 9897/952 7249.

Nov. 24 Thirukkarthikai Dheepam; Full Moon; Feast of Christ, The King.

Nov. 28 Chankatahara Chathurthi.

Nov. 30 Feast of St. Andrew.

At Bhawan Centre, 4A Castle-town Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 0171 381 3086/4608.

Nov. 16 6.30pm Bharatanatyam by Sangeeta Banerjee.

Nov. 17 7.00pm Bhavan & Asian Music Circuit present Jugabandi.

Nov. 24 6.00pm S.C.O.T. presents exclusive Vocal Recital in London by Sri T.V. Sankaranarayanan, most acclaimed vocalist from India accompanied by Sri P. Sunder Rajan on Violin and Sri Srimushnam V. Raja Rao on Mirudangam. Also Telephone: 0181 693 4088/870 9897/952 7249.

AUSTRALIAN NEWSLETTER

The Annual Ganesha Visarjana Festival was celebrated at the Sri Venkateswara Temple, Sydney on 22nd September and over a dozen Hindu organisations took part with thousands of devotees from all parts of the New South Wales state thronging the temple. The Hindu organisations set up stalls to exhibit their publications and posters. A very large canteen opened at 11 a.m. and did a brisk sale of South Indian delicacies like Dosa, Vadai, Laddu and North Indian snacks like Samosas, Gulab, Jamun etc.

The religious rituals began very early in the morning with Kalasa Pooja and Sri Maha Ganapathy Homam followed by Maha Abishekam and pooja at 12.30 p.m. At 2 p.m. a pooja was conducted for a specially made clay statue of Sri Ganesha also known as Visarjana Ganapathy. This statue was taken in procession to Stanwell Park Beach and immersed in the waters of the Pacific Ocean with great pomp and ceremony.

There was a cultural show with a variety of items including dances, plays and speeches by both adults and children contributed by the participating organisations. One of the popular events for children was a colouring competition of an outline drawing of Sri Ganesha. Hundreds of children took part and winners were awarded prizes and merit certificates.

Vembadi Old Girls' Association A.G.M.

(N.S.W.) was held on 27th July at the Uniting Church Hall, Carrington Road, Strathfield. After the secretary Shyamala Raghavan read the minutes, the treasurer Nimmi Manohar presented the accounts of the combined Vembadi/Central college dinner held last year. The following were elected office-bearers for 1996/97. **President:** Devi Balasubramaniam, **Vice President:** Tilaka Mylvaganam, **Secretary:** Shanta Fonseka, **Asst. Secretary:** Dr. Sivagowri Manamohan, **Treasurer:** Shyamala Raghavan, **Asst. Treasurer:** Nimmi Manohar, **Committee Members:** Indra Balakrishnan, Shivani Narendran, Kala Thiruchelvam, Shanta Arulampalam, Geetha Amilthan, Sugirtham Dharmapalan, Kumuthini Sunderesan and Nanthini Kanthasamy.

There was a lively discussion on future events and activities and it was formally decided to hold a Vembadi O.G.A. Dinner Dance on 22nd February 1997. This was enthusiastically received by everyone present.

Tamil Senior Citizens' Association (N.S.W.): The Fifth Annual General Meeting was held on 14th September. The following office-bearers were elected. **President:** E. Vijayaratham, **Vice President:** C.S. Sebaratnam, **Secretary:** L.S.C. Canagasingam, **Asst. Secretary:** Dr. E.J.J. Aiyathurai, **Treasurer:** A. Venkataraman, **Asst. Treasurer:** R. Sithamparapillai, **Committee Members:** C. Alagendran, A.N. Jayatheva, N. Murugesu, N.C. Rajanayagam, N. Satkunananda, V. Satchithananda, K. Sivagnanam and I. Wijayanayagam.

CANADIAN NEWSLETTER

Weather: Mild with a lot of autumn sunshine.

The Sahara Cup sponsored by Sahara India, a company which has a significant presence in the fields of para banking infrastructure, housing, aviation and mass communication, is a five-year Annual Challenge Series of cricket to be played between India and Pakistan in Canada. This unique event was conceived by the International Management Group and its associates with the co-operation of the Cricket Boards of Pakistan and India as well as the support of the International Cricket Council. This year's 50-over, one-day International was hosted by the Toronto Cricket, Skating and Curling Club between the 14th and 22nd of September and was the biggest ever cricketing event Toronto had seen. Though rain and its inevitable delays marred the start of the game, the fans here were treated to a bonanza of scintillating cricket. Pakistan won the series 3-2.

Volunteer Awards: The Government of Ontario has elected to award the 10 year Voluntary Service Awards to Kingsbury Jeevanayagam, Aloy Ratnasingham, Fred Balasingam and Mani Pathmarajah for their continued dedication to the upliftment and welfare of the Tamil community especially the elders. Ann Canagaratna, Bavani Sivaramalingam and Dominic Rajan were recipients of the Five Year Volunteer Service Awards.

Manickavasagam Suresh: Professor Francis Boyle of the University of Illinois, an expert on International Law continued his evidence as a defence witness in the Federal Court of Canada in the matter of two security certificates filed against the above-named. The allegations are that there are reasonable grounds to believe that (1) he is a member of an organization that will engage in terrorism (2) that he has engaged in terrorism and (3) that he is or was a member of an organisation which is or was engaged in terrorism. The organisation in question is the L.T.T.E.

During the hearing so far the government counsel conceded that there were no allegations of criminal activity or misconduct, that he engaged in terrorism in Sri Lanka or any known procurement of arms, ammunition, weapons or material of military application in Canada or any allegation that he was involved in shipping such material from Canada. The court sessions are presided over by Mr. Justice Max Teitelbaum. Mr. Pala Nedumaran, President, Tamil National Movement and Mr. V. Navaratnam, former M.P. for Kayts have appeared as witnesses for the defence.

Shivanthi's Bharatha Natya Arangetram



The Bharatha Natya Arangetram of Kumari Shivanthi, daughter of Pax and Janaki (Gladys) Chinnakone of Letchworth, Hertfordshire and disciple of Smt Rajini Shureshkumar received an overwhelming ovation at the Beck Theatre, Hayes, Middlesex on 27th July 1996. By her meticulous rendering of her performance with interwoven poised gesture, intricate rhythmic limb movements, poetic expression and angelic grace she held the audience hypnotically spellbound.

The distinguished chief guest at the occasion, Dr. R. Niththyananthan con-

gratulated Shivanthi and her Guru Smt Rajini Shureshkumar speaking in praise of her skill, grace and self esteem said 'Shivanthi has a brilliant future in this great field of our ancient art. She is only thirteen and I am confident that she will excel in this field with the care and encouragement given by her parents. I must congratulate Smt Rajini for presenting before us such a talented dancer in this art field'.

The accompanying artistes were **Nattuvangam:** Smt Rajini Shureshkumar, **Vocal:** Smt Seetha Lakshmi (she hails from a family of musicians from Thiruvurur in Tamilnadu, where the 'music trinities' were born), **Mirudangam:** Sri Soma Sundara Desikar, **Flute:** Sri Gnanavarathan Pitchaiappa, **Violin:** Sri Thiruvurur Kothandapani and **Morsing:** Kandiah Chidambaranathan.

The programme was compered by Sri Wimal Sockanathan.

The guest of honour was Mr. M.J. Kelly, Headmaster of The John Henry Newman School, Stevenage, Hertfordshire of which Shivanthi is a pupil.

Padma Navaratnam.

Arulnandy Thavendran – (An Appreciation)

The untimely and unexpected death of Thavendran, a renowned Chartered Accountant and Financial Advisor, Colombo, came as a rude shock to his family, relatives and friends. Thavendran and Indranee, his wife, had gone to the USA in May 1996 to spend a six-month holiday with their two children who are residing there, but fate snatched him away suddenly on the 14th of July 1996, while he was sightseeing in Las Vegas.

It is indeed very hard to accept that Arulnandy Thavendran is no more with us; but the two names Arulnandy and Thavendran will remain in our memories for ever. Thavendran's father, the late Mr. Arulnandy, was an eminent scholar and educationist, and the first Sri Lankan to head the Department of Education. With his excellent academic background and sound practical experience, Mr. Arulnandy contributed immensely to the development of Sri Lanka's national education system. On retiring as Director of Education, he continued his services to the cause of education as a Lecturer in Education at the University of Ceylon. Mr. Arulnandy's greatness lay not only in his academic and professional achievements; he was above all a generous and kind-hearted gentleman who had ungrudgingly helped many deserving persons to establish themselves in life.

Providentially, all eight children of Mr. Arulnandy had inherited their father's intellect and noble human values. However, those who have been very closely associated with the Arulnandy family will readily concede that Thavendran was blessed more with his father's qualities than any of his siblings. Undoubtedly, he could be called the most illustrious son of an illustrious father.

Thave (as Thavendran was affectionate-

ly referred to by his many friends and relatives) was born on the 18th of December 1932. He spent his boyhood in Point Pedro, Jaffna, and received his early education at Royal College, Colombo, where he won the mathematics prize. After graduating from the University of Ceylon with an honours degree in mathematics, Thave opted for a career in the field of Accountancy. At the final examination conducted by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka, he won the much coveted Landers Prize awarded for overall outstanding performance.

Thave's first professional appointment was with the Colombo Commercial Company, then ranked among the largest multi-national enterprises, where he soon rose to become one of two Sri Lankans appointed for the first time to the Company's Board of Directors. With the nationalization of the Colombo Commercial Company, Thave accepted a position as Financial Controller at Maharajahs, the well-known Sri Lankan business conglomeration. In recent years, Thave has served as Financial Consultant to several leading commercial establishments in Colombo and to international organizations including the World Bank. Thave was also a keen sportsman; tennis and table tennis were his favorite outdoor games. He had won the tennis colors at the University of Ceylon and was Sri Lanka's table tennis doubles champion. On several occasions he served as the Manager of his country's table tennis team. Like his father, Thave was also an ardent chess and bridge player.

It is no exaggeration to state that Thave excelled his father in terms of humanitarian qualities. He was the one to whom many turned to for support and solace in their hour of need. Particularly during the July 1983 ethnic pogrom when several of his relations and friends in Colombo were rendered homeless and helpless, Thave's residence in Colpetty served as their refuge. Despite his busy professional schedule, Thave continued to accommodate and assist his numerous friends and relations fleeing to Colombo from Jaffna and other areas affected by the ongoing ethnic violence.

In rendering these humanitarian services, Thave had always received the whole-hearted support of his equally genial and generous wife Indranee and his two adorable children Anjali and Ravi. No amount of words will comfort these souls over their irreparable loss. They can only draw consolation from the fact that their beloved husband and father was adored and admired by all his friends, colleagues, and relations. This was amply demonstrated by the large and distinguished gathering of his friends and relations, most of whom had flown from as far as Australia, Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Canada, United Kingdom, and from various parts of USA to pay their respects at the simple and solemn last rites performed by the children at Palm Dale, California on 17th July 1996.

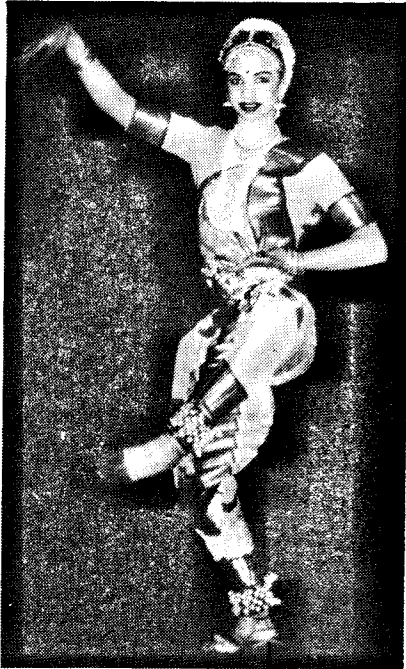
Truly it could be said that neither in bronze nor in marble will Arulnandy Thavendran be remembered better than in the hearts of hundreds of persons who have had the privilege and pleasure of being associated with him at sometime or other in one way or another.

May Baghawan Sri Sathiya Sai Baba grant Thave the eternal bliss.

S. Selvaratnam,

Retired Senior Expert,
United Nations, Bangkok.

Ahrani's Arangetram



South London Tamil School in Croydon which celebrated its tenth anniversary two years ago has the distinction of staging five Arangetrams so far. In Mrudangam, Ranjit Kanagasundaram (1992) and Muhilan Padmamohan (1996), and in Bharata Natyam: Brinda Selvarajasingam (1993), Jane Rasiyah (1996) and Ahrani Balasundaram (1996).

Ahrani's Arangetram on 20th August at Croydon's Ashcroft Theatre was conducted with a full orchestra by her Guru Smt Malathi Jayanayagam. Malathi is an alumnus of Ramanathan Academy of Jaffna, who has had teaching experience in Sri Lanka and now in London. Ahrani is her first student prepared for presenting at an Arangetram.

The programme started with Easwaranjali, homage to Easwara who presides over the three important shrines of Lanka – Tirukonamalai, Tirukethiswaram and Munneswaram. This is a beautiful composition. The rest of the repertoire followed the usual pattern with Jathiswaram, Varnam, Keerthanam etc. Ahrani's steps and movements in Jathiswaram showed her intensive training and good grasp of time and adavus. The Varnam 'Roopamu Juchi' in Thodi ragam, a long and involved composition (originally choreographed by

Krishnamachariar for Kalakshetra) was selected, but condensed to suit an arangetram. Those who are familiar would have noticed the difference. In the Charanam part of it the syncopation (usi) could be shown only with hard and long practice. Malathi has persevered on her jati verbalisation which came out clearly. Yaso Mithradas is an up and coming singer blessed with a suitable voice particularly for Bharata Natyam performance and would do well in the future with progress in diction.

Muthu Sivaraja and his orchestra team is a superb ensemble at any dance performance. Ahrani, like many other Arangetram Nayakis should try to take the stage occasionally with the cooperation of her parents and keep the art in shine.

S. Sivapatha Sundaram.

Chandrikka Sathasivam Arangetram



Smt Priyadarshana Yogarajah of the Pranaivalaya School of Dance presented the Arangetram of her second pupil, Chandrikka, on board the Battersea Grand Hall London SW11 on the 1st September. Young Chandrikka Sathasivam, a student at the Burntwood School Tooting, trained under Smt. Priyadarshana for seven years, performed in the traditional Adayar Kalashetra Style in which her Guru and her Guru's Guru Smt. Subadra Sivadasan were trained.

After the usual Canesha Sthuthi with Alarippu followed by Jethiswaram Chandrikka performed the 'Sakiye' Varnam. The audience gasped with disbelief during the approximately 20 minutes of Varnam as none appeared to expect Chandrikka to perform a solo of one of the climax scenes in Maha Bharat – the gambling scene at the Gaurava Palace ending in the disrobing of Draupati. One moment we saw the evil Thuchathana gleefully disrobing Draupati, the next moment we saw Draupati with her hands held over her head calling for God Krishna. Many were moved to tears at the superb performance of mono acting performed in this Bharatha Natyam piece by Chandrikka – a popular drama student at her School. Credit for this Varnam should also be given to her Guru for choosing this and training Chandrikka, and also to Sri Manikkam Yogeswaran who sang the Varnam song with appropriate modulations. Compering for this per-

formance was in the trained voice of Sri Wimal Sockanathan who added colour while introducing the items.

The chief guest was Dr. Richard Widess, a Scholar in Indian Music at the London University. Mrs. Barbara Williams, Deputy Principal Burntwood School and Mr. T. Pathmanathan, Retired Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Govt. of Sri Lanka, and presently of the British Red Cross London were guests of honour.

After the interval Chandrikka presented four attractive padams on Krishna, Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Shiva and on Bharathi Song. In all of them Chandrikka showed her understanding and skill. The accompaniments were – Sri P. Kirupakaran on Mirudangam, Sri L. Kothandapani on Violin, Sri. P. Gnanavarathan on Flute, and Sri K. Sithamparanathan on Morsing. Chandrikka who we were told is a keen painter and dramatist and a member of the Merton Sai Centre achieved 7 A's and 9 A stars in the recent GCSE exam. Keep it up Chandrikka.

Muhilan's Mrudanga Arangetram



Before the summer holidays ended parents of children are naturally anxious to finalise their children's cultural commitments. The cluster of Arangetrams in August showed this anxiety.

The Mrudanga Arangetram of 12 year old Muhilan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Padmamohan, held on 24th August at Ashcroft Theatre in Croydon happened to be one of the many Mrudanga events. The young artist was trained by Muthu Sivaraja who is an acknowledged Guru to many students in London. Smt Kokila Thangarajah who teaches music to Muhilan took the part of lead singer and made the occasion into a full Sangeetha Kacheri, with fifteen items of songs. Her renderings in a variety of thalams provided ample opportunity to Muhilan to exhibit his grasp of mrudanga solkattus. Thisram, misram, khandam and other combinations of rhythmic measures were exhibited by this young artiste.

The supporting instrumentalists played an important part. The contribution of violinist Gnanambikai Padmasikamani to the voice of Kokila was beautiful and showed maturity in training. Gnanavar-

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adan's flute and Chidambaranathan's morsing highlighted the event. The appearance of young Anjalo Kumaradasan playing on the ghatam and doubling on the kanjira was a surprise. He is a TVG product we know, but his appearance was rare. His handling of the instruments is tender and attractive. He needs more exposure. Congratulations to Muhilan who should continue playing the mrudangam after what was indicated in the warning note in the speech of the Guru Muthu Sivarajah.

A word about the inevitable colourful brochures that are produced at every Arangetram ceremony. In many cases important information is neglected. Muhilan's brochure displays on the front cover the young man as a left handed mrudangist. In the listed items for performance many facts are wrong. This happens commonly in many cases.

S. Sivapatha Sundarah.

Vijaya Delights Devotees



M.R. Vijaya and her prestigious troupe from Tamil Nadu, South India stole away the hearts and minds of the vast numbers of devotees who attended her performances staged in the Hindu temples of London from 2nd to 18th August 1996. Vijaya is a renowned vocalist and her enchanting singing earned her and her troupe much deserved chorus of applause. Her daughter Sarada Sri Devi displayed her talents splendidly and raised hopes of immense potential for a bright future.

The song invoking the blessings of Goddess Amman to bring peace and harmony to the people of Sri Lanka was the highlight of the programme.

Excellent support was provided by the following group of artistes:- Sri Muthu Sivarajah and Sri Kirupaharan on Mirudan-

gam, Sri Kothandapani on Violin, Sri Sundaramoorthy on Tabla and Sri Sithamparanathan on Morsing.

The Hindu devotees of London should be most grateful to Mr. Sundaram of Wimbledon for making the arrangements for this hugely successful programme.

Sri Ganesh.

Selladurai Velauthapillai - Appreciation



At a time when Tamil scholarship among the expatriate Tamil community is becoming a vanishing phenomenon, the Tamil world has lost a great Tamil grammarian and literature in the demise of Mr. Selladurai Velauthapillai. In 1962 when I joined the Ceylon Educational Publications as a Dictionary Assistant, he was already there employed as an Editor charged with the responsibility of publishing Tamil text books for schools. He was so simple and humble that it took one some time to know the depth of his knowledge and the width of his devotion. It was when both of us were learning Tamil literature from Sivan Karunalaya Pandiyanar that I began to cherish his friendship and appreciate his great qualities of head and heart. He was one of the very few who did not suffer from the fever of haughtiness. He was so deeply immersed in Tamil literature and Saiva Siddhantham that he always stressed and maintained that the aim of both of them was the same - to achieve the equipoise of

'Yaathum ooray, yaavarum kelir' (every country is my country, every man is my kinsman).

Mr. Velauthapillai who was born on 25.9.23 graduated from the University of Ceylon with an honours degree in Tamil and became a teacher of Kokuvil Hindu College in 1947. His linguistic abilities and teaching skills and his penchant for research took him in 1953 to the Official Languages Commission where he was a Tamil instructor until 1958 when he was invited to join the Educational Publications department as an Editor in which capacity he contributed in great measure towards the production of many textbooks and the coining of many new technical words in Tamil. In 1976 he was appointed an Assistant Commissioner of Examinations to reorganise the Confidential Branch, which he put in proper shape within a period of three years.

Though quiet and modest, Mr. Velauthapillai was a highly sociable person ever ready to help anyone in need. He was very affable and amenable. So unassuming and cheerful was he that anyone could have access to him. Colombo Tamil Sangam and Kotahena Vivekananda Society were two main organisations through which he rendered yeoman service to the Tamil language and Hindu religion. It could be said that there was no Tamil organisation in Colombo, which did not benefit from his fund of knowledge at some time or other.

The political storm of Sri Lanka compelled even the polite soul of Velauthapillai to uproot and implant himself in Canada which was neither conducive to his health nor congenial to the propagation of his erudition. He complained to me on the phone of his inability to pursue his literary activities in the way he was used to in Colombo. It is unfortunate that the expatriate Canadian Tamils should have failed to benefit from this Tamil treasure house.

Mr. Velauthapillai passed away after a brief illness on 23.8.96. He is survived by his dear wife Nesamalar (nee Perampalam), an ideal partner equally skilled as he was and four children Drs. Sivapalan (USA), Nandapalan (UK), Manjula Jayaparakasan (Canada) and Mr. Sivakumar (Canada). May he be born in a land where he can continue his service to the Tamils.

S. Sriskandarajah,

16 Roman Road, Ilford, Essex.

Memories of a Great Man

It was with immense sadness that I learned of the passing away of Dr. Nagalingam Thirugnana Sampanathan, in Colombo, on the 2nd August. For several decades he was a much loved physician and surgeon in Jaffna, where many thousands benefited from his care and compassion, including myself. Through the columns of the Tamil Times I would like to pay my tribute to this great man.

He was much more than a physician to me. Our association spanned many years. It began when we were both undergraduates and what was later a doctor-patient relationship became a close friendship and his demise has left me with a deep sense of loss. I offer his family my heartfelt sympathies.

Memories of this great man come flooding back as I relive the anguish experienced when I left him bidding good-bye at his residence in Kondavil on the eve of my departure to Australia.

Dr. Sampanthan hailed from an illustrious family with its roots in Karainagar. Being one of the first MBBS graduates of the University of Ceylon, he proceeded to the United Kingdom and very quickly obtained the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons; but on returning to Sri Lanka his heart was not in the Health Department 'rat race' and he gave up his appointment in Kandy to return to Jaffna to be with his people.

Then began a distinguished career as a general physician and surgeon, known not only for his brilliant skills but also for his warm humanity. Sampanthan became Sampanthar and Jaffna was blessed with another 'PS'. Dr. Subramaniam, one time Provincial Surgeon in the north, was revered by the people for his service and in Dr. Sampanthan we saw another example of such skill, dedication and popularity. The burgeoning co-operative movement provided Dr. Sampanthan the ideal opportunity to fulfil to develop the medical services in a manner he always wanted. He became the Medical Superintendent of the Moolai Hospital, building it up as an institution and bringing high quality medical care within easy reach of ordinary men and women. Following his retirement he was invited to practise at the Hospital Road Clinic, Jaffna, which again became a focal point for the delivery of excellent medical care. Dr. Sampanthan continued his practice despite failing eyesight, his extensive experience, critical analysis and mature judgement more than compensating for any visual impairment.

He could have easily moved to greener and safer pastures but faced life in the way one would expect - with stoicism, which was his hallmark. With courage he endured a terrible tragedy some years previously when his brother, a retired senior government servant, and sister in law lost their lives in his presence during the outbreak of IPKF disturbances. He had

accepted his failing eyesight, deteriorating health and the unavoidable move from his cherished homeland with fortitude as he was not one for self pity. I have often wondered what justice there is in all this, perhaps there is some kind of higher justice that one cannot comprehend. How else can one think of the suffering great men like Ramakrishna had to endure towards the culmination of their moral lives? May his soul rest in peace at the feet of God.

C.K. Kanthaswami,

Australia.

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