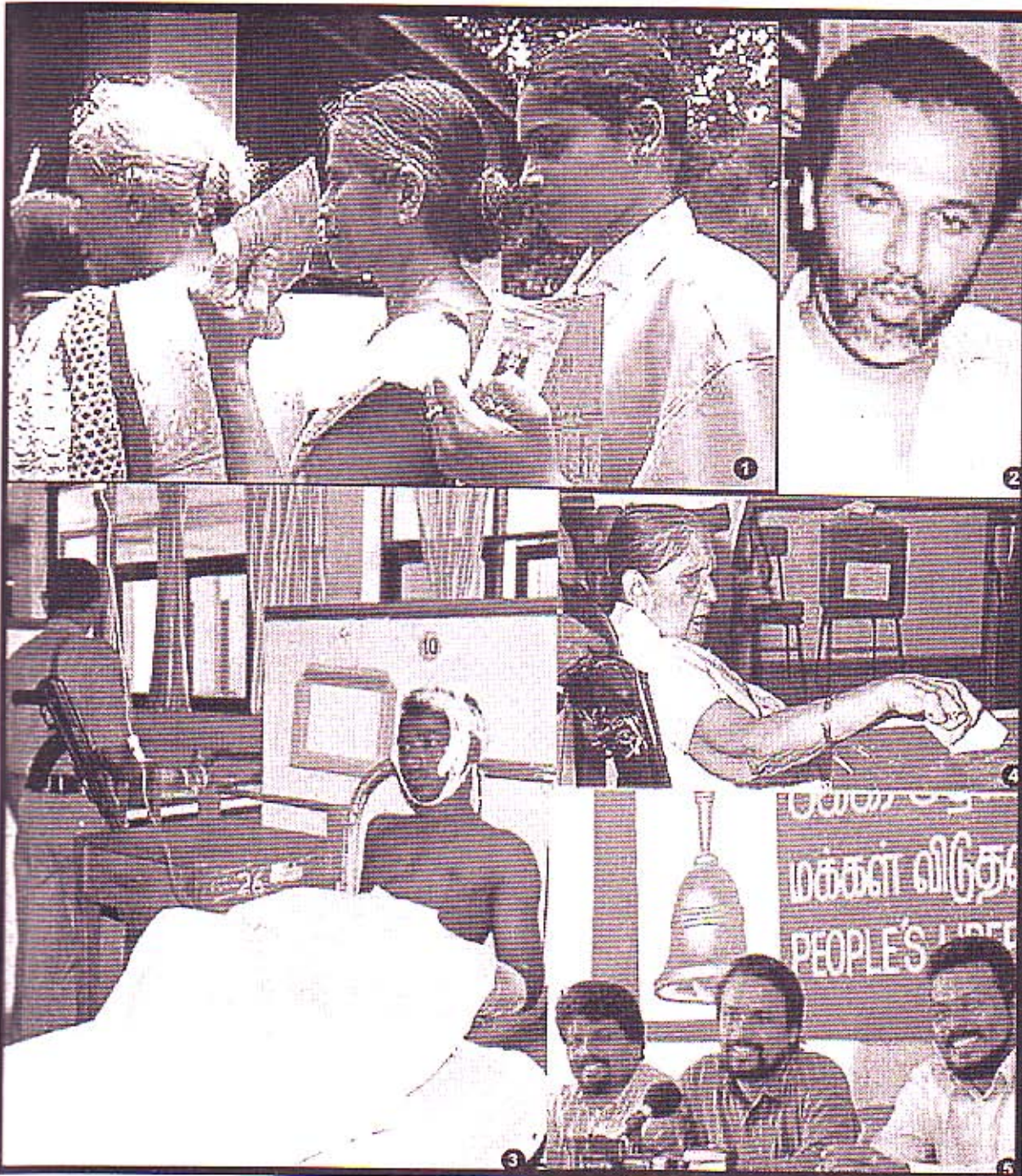


Tamil **TIMES**

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1. Women voting in the October 10 General Election
2. Rauf Hakeem, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress Leader - the new King Maker
3. Survivor from the Bindunuwewa Massacre in hospital
4. Mrs Sirima Bandaranaike voting in the election shortly before death
5. Leaders of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna at press conference after winning 8 seats





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-Voltaire



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Dangerous Trends and Crippled Minds

The hope that the October 10th election would bring about a more settled political atmosphere in which the serious problems facing Sri Lanka, including the ethnic conflict, would be better addressed has not been realised. In fact the situation now is more unsettled and uncertain than before the election.

President Kumaratunga sought a mandate from the people to enact a new Constitution that provided for enhanced devolution of powers to the regions, but has failed. The Peoples Alliance led by her just managed to cobble up a majority in Parliament in coalition with two minority parties. That her grip on the governing coalition is less firm now than before the election is demonstrated by the fact that she had to succumb to the exacting demands by the National Unity Alliance/Sri Lanka Muslim Congress which wanted more than its pound of flesh leaving her in the unenviable position of having to appoint the largest cabinet in the world.

The outcome of the election did not leave the opposition United National Party and its leader any more happy. Its bid to regain power also failed, the party securing less number of seats in Parliament than it had before the election. Having failed in its attempt to form a coalition government with a number of other minority parties, it is condemned to remain in the opposition. However, without accepting its electoral fate at least for the time being, its leader is threatening to bring down the government in 60 days if some of its demands are not met thereby creating a situation of political instability.

The only redeeming feature of the outcome of the election was the resounding rejection by the people of the extremist chauvinist forces represented by the Sihala Urumaya which secured only a derisory 1.5 percent of the votes in the whole country.

Within a few weeks of the election, two incidents have occurred which point to the development of dangerous trends. The first was the brutal murder of a courageous Tamil journalist, M Nimalarajan, in Jaffna on 19 October by so-called unidentified gunmen. Many have accused an ex-Tamil militant group which is associated with the government of being involved in his assassination. Nimalarajan's killing highlights the grave threat posed to those who exercise the right to freedom of expression in militarised societies. There are many who sensing the threat remain silent or fall in line with those speak only the language of the gun. But there are some others who despite the threat feel it their duty to assert and exercise their right to free expression, and Nimalarajan fell into this latter category thus becoming another martyr to the cause of freedom of expression in a society where the culture of the gun and the bomb predominate.

Much more heinous was the incident on 25 October when about 30 inmates of the Bindunuwewa Rehabilitation Centre were brutally massacred to death and many more seriously injured by a mob of persons numbering in their hundreds armed with all manner of weapons. It is said that the Centre had been in existence for about ten years without any problems. It housed those LTTE cadre who had surrendered to the security forces, and most of them were in their early teens. That this outrage should have been committed in a government-run rehabilitation centre makes it difficult for the government not to accept responsibility although it might have been carried out by others. The massacre was not something that the government would have even anticipated, and the President had expressed shock and revulsion at its occurrence and ordered a full investigation. It has attracted universal condemnation, the Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan, leading the call for an impartial investigation with a view to bringing to justice all those responsible. The world is watching what the government's concrete response to this atrocity is. A comprehensive impartial speedy inquiry by a totally independent judicial commission is the minimum that is expected from the government.

What is noteworthy is, unlike in July 1983 when the massacre of Tamil prisoners occurred at the Welikada prison in the midst of the islandwide anti-Tamil violence, or on many subsequent occasions when soldiers went berserk killing civilians the media sought to cover up the truth, on this occasion one could see full, fair and detailed coverage in the Sri Lankan media of the massacre, the events leading and subsequent to it. There has been no attempt at a cover up or to put a gloss over the incident and its details. Several reports and articles by journalists and commentators have been published giving graphic details of what happened.

From the facts that have so far emerged, it is very clear that external forces have been responsible in creating unrest among the inmates resulting in a confrontation between them and the personnel in charge of the Centre. It is also clear that the attack on the Centre and the inmates was not a spontaneous one by an incensed violent mob, but was pre-planned and premeditated. There is also evidence of posters and leaflets being displayed demanding the removal of the Centre in the days before the attack. The large mob that had gathered and surrounded the Centre came from distant places pointing to a degree of mobilisation. The role of some of the personnel manning the Centre also has been questionable - either they were grossly incompetent and negligent, or they were in collusion.

Some commentators have observed that the forces behind the Bindunuwewa massacre are those which are associated with the Sihala Urumaya - the Sinhala Veeravidahana and the National Movement Against Terrorism with which some retired and ex-military men are connected. The diabolical plan of these forces, which were severely mauled at the elections, is to provoke a communal conflagration - a repeat of July 1983. Only crippled minds with political projects of their own to prosecute would want such a catastrophe to revisit the island and its people. All decent sections of society - religious leaders, politicians and their parties, civil and human rights organisations, journalists, academics, professionals, trade unions etc. should ensure that the mass of the people do not fall a prey to or victims of the diabolical designs of these reactionary forces with crippled minds.

The Bindunuwewa Massacre

- The Inside Story -

D B S Jeyaraj

"This incident will no doubt be a huge black mark on this country's human rights record. If the killing of prisoners held in Colombo prisons during the 1983 riots brought the reputation of this country to the lowest depths, these killings will revive those memories."

- Editorial, The Island 26 October 2000

Bindunuwewa is an idyllic village less than three miles away from Bandarawela town on the Badulla road. The horrendous massacre of unarmed Tamil prisoners that took place there in the morning of Wednesday, October 25, has now led to Bindunuwewa, Bandarawela being coupled with a barbaric deed that has sullied the human rights record of Sri Lanka in an almost indelible manner.

A frenzied Sinhala mob numbering thousands presumably with the connivance of certain officials besieged a correctional facility in the area and brutally attacked the Tamil inmates killing at least 29 and injuring several others.

In one evil stroke, the showpiece of Sri Lanka's efforts at rehabilitating young Tamils allegedly involved with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), was transformed into a prime exhibit of xenophobic bestiality.

Abandoned 'helpers'

The Bindunuwewa project in Bandarawela received a fillip when a large number of youngsters allegedly surrendered to the armed forces after an operation in the Wannai. The LTTE had apparently withdrawn suddenly leaving these 'helpers' in an abandoned state. Most of them were very young and in their teens. Even as these youngsters were being rehabilitated there was a trickle of similar age group from other areas too.

All of them were young and also not fully fledged LTTE cadres. Some had allegedly surrendered and others captured. The government also derived much publicity mileage out of these youngsters through media exposure

until censured by human rights organisations that according to International Humanitarian Law: "Prisoners must at all times be protected against acts of public curiosity."

The LTTE however has never accepted the assertion by Colombo that these youngsters were LTTE cadres. In fact a statement issued by the LTTE after the Bandarawela incident states that "the victims of this savagery are not LTTE members nor are they surrendered 'child soldiers.' They are innocent Tamil youth arrested on suspicion and detained without trial under the notorious Prevention of Terrorism act. These young detainees have been protesting against their unjust arrest and demanding release."

A correctional facility

The Bindunuwewa Rehabilitation Centre was in principle run by a management comprising representatives of the Presidential Secretariat, Child Protection Authority, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, National Youth Services Council and the Don Bosco Technical Centre. In practice the detention camp's commandant was Captain Ajith Abeyratne of the Army. A police unit under a sergeant and twelve home guards recruited from the neighbourhood were in charge of security. There was a civilian staff of 24, mainly from the NYSC. The youths were technically detained under the Prevention of Terrorism act but were in reality not prisoners held under stringent security.

Bindunuwewa was a rehabilitation and welfare centre and not a maximum security camp. It was a correctional fa-

cility that allowed inmates a great degree of freedom. This concession had not been abused. Thus the security arrangements were minimal.

The ages of the inmates ranged from 14 - 23. They were being taught technical skills, ethics, and also Sinhala. They were encouraged to meditate and also afforded psychological counselling. The fluency acquired in Sinhala enabled many inmates to strike up conversations with members of the Sinhala community in the neighbourhood. Since some freedom of movement was allowed, there was interaction between the detainees and the villagers. This happy state of affairs had prevailed until a few months ago. The serpent that entered Eden in this case was in the form of Sinhala chauvinistic ideology propounded by neo-fascist outfits during the election campaign.

A Tiger den

These Sinhala chauvinistic elements had a pet target when doing propaganda in the Bandarawela area. They pinpointed the Bindunuwewa centre as a Tiger den within the Sinhala heartland. According to these merchants of hate, the PA and UNP that wanted to hand over the North and East to Prabhakaran also wanted to add Bandarawela to him. Unless and until the kotis (Tigers) at Bindunuwewa were destroyed the whole of Uva in general and the Bandarawela area in particular was not safe, they asserted. The Sinhala people must be vigilant and drive these Tigers out or the whole centre had to be dismantled and detainees transported elsewhere, it was propagated.

The general election results saw the Sinhala chauvinist elements being trounced but nevertheless the venomous hate spewed by them did make an impact in Bindunuwewa and surrounding areas. The correctional facility was viewed with hate and mistrust. Also some Sinhala chauvinist organisations recruited more members from the Bindunuwewa village. The ideology of ethnic hate began to take root. A campaign began agitating for the Bindunuwewa centre to be relocated from their area. The authorities failed to take note of these rumblings.

Meanwhile the centre too was being subject to new dangers from within. A few of the home guards hailing from Bindunuwewa were now converts to the Sinhala chauvinist cause. They began taunting and irritating the Tamil detainees. They began to threaten and intimidate them and wanted them to leave or be destroyed. Complaints made to the civilian authorities or camp commandant were not taken serious note of. The Tamil inmates were for the first time beginning to feel insecure. These feelings were being exacerbated by a yearning for freedom also.

The want of 'freedom'

For some unknown reason the authorities at the centre had promised the detainees at one time that they would all be allowed to go home after three months. When the date lapsed they were assured that they would get their 'freedom' after the elections. So the cry for freedom began after elections were over. The inmates also had a leader now and were better organised.

Anthony Johnson of Kalladdy, Batticaloa, had been admitted to the centre recently. He was in his twenties and politically conscious. Under his leadership the inmates began agitating for their release. In the meantime tensions created by the 'hawkish' home guards were adding to the woes of the detainees. The communication gap between the detainees and the management along with the inability of the latter in comprehending the deteriorating environment was a recipe for disaster in the making.

On Monday, October 23, the Tamil detainees began a protest fast. Their demand was "Viduthalai Sei Allathu Visaarana Sei" (release us or commence an inquiry). In spite of entreaties by the management and threats by the home guards the fast continued. On Tuesday 24, police personnel from Bandarawela were called in. The home guards and some policemen tried to force feed the detainees. This resulted in clashes.

The battle begins

At one point the detainees grabbed a warden and held him temporarily as a hostage after barricading themselves in

their sleeping quarters to protect themselves from the policemen and home guards. Thereafter soldiers from the Diyatalawa cantonment were called in. The army was able to persuade the young detainees into giving up their protest without resorting to force. The army also gave first aid treatment to seven detainees injured in the fracas.

Even as the protest entered the second day posters and pamphlets were being circulated in Bindunuwewa and surrounding areas. These threatened the inmates with dire consequences. One poster warned that Bandarawela would not be handed over to the Tigers and that the 'Tamil dogs' in Bandarawela would be killed and their flesh fed to dogs. Some of these were visible in the premises of the centre too.

On Tuesday (24 October) night after the army had left for Diyatalawa one home guard brought one of these leaflets to the Tamil detainees and began uttering obscenities and threats waving it. Some youths got angry and assaulted him. Breaking free, he ran off promising revenge.

A mob attack

The Tamil inmates were all asleep when a mob surrounded the centre at about 5.30 a.m. on Wednesday, October 25. Aided and abetted by some home guards and policemen the mob numbering nearly two thousand started attacking the inmates with clubs, swords, axes, knives, rods and even stones. Some of the attackers were women. It is said that some of the mob had been transported from elsewhere in vehicles while the bulk were from Bindunuwewa and two adjacent villages.

Some youths tried to escape by running away. The mob shouting "duvapalla Demalu duvapalla" captured them effortlessly. A few were shot by the home guards. According to some Uva based Tamil politicians and journalists who spoke to some of the survivors the unarmed youths were absolutely at the mercy of the mob.

What followed thereafter was a horrible replay of 1983 July where an armed majority unleashed its fury on an unarmed, defenceless minority. Brutally

cruel acts were perpetrated. Ears were cut off, mouths slashed, fingers crushed. In some instances the Tamil youths were stripped and subjected to torturous acts. The centre building too was set ablaze and in some instances the half dead youths were tossed in bodily into the raging inferno. The security personnel attached to the centre remained inactive.

Then came additional policemen from Bandarawela who also did not attempt to stop the mayhem. Finally came the army from Diyatalawa. The soldiers also did not fire on the mob but stopped the carnage by firing shots in the air.

Attending to the 'kotis'

The army then tried to transport the dead and injured persons away from the scene. Again some of the 'veerayas' (heroes) wanted the army to allow them to finish the job. But the soldiers are reported to have said, "You should have done it before we got here," and proceeded with their duty while the mob dispersed with its fury dissipated and the centre burnt down.

There were further problems when the medical staff at Bandarawela hospital refused to attend to the 'kotis'. Later on minimal attention was provided. Some were taken to the Badulla and Diyatalawa hospitals. Seven seriously injured were taken to Colombo. It is said that medical attention in Uva was expedited only after Chief Minister Weerawanni intervened and ordered the health service to discharge their duties or face the consequences. Weerawanni along with Provincial Councillor Velauthan and former MP T. V. Sennan visited the hospitals personally.

Journalists trying to gather news about the massacre were subjected to exercises in obfuscation by police personnel. Initially a completely distorted picture of the events were provided. It was portrayed as an escape attempt, a riot etc. whereas the sordid episode was in essence a barbaric massacre. Details about the number of persons affected are also confusing.

One version puts the number of detainees at 84 with 27 dead, 31 injured and 16 missing. Another count says 40 with 26 killed and 14 injured. A third puts it at 55 with 29 killed and 26 injured. By Friday 27th morning only 13

dead persons and 23 injured persons had been identified.

Since some of those injured were in a critical condition it is feared that some more would succumb in the next few days. Bodies are lying in Bandarawela, Badulla, Diyatalawa and Colombo hospitals. Relatives of the inmates have not been informed fully of the situation yet. It is also announced that a mass burial would be held with or without family members attending. What is required of the government now is a clear statement stating the true situation and casualty figures.

Subsequent events demonstrated that the perpetrators of this monstrosity were neither repentant nor cowed. When a Non-Governmental Organisation delegation tried to visit the scene they were stopped in their tracks by some villagers who told them "we have cleansed the area of Tigers and protected our homeland. Go away and don't report anything that would discredit our Sinhala Buddhist country." When the police took in a few hundreds of people for questioning crowds numbering thousands converged in a hostile manner outside the police stations resulting in the suspension of interrogation.

This made TULF MP for Batticaloa observe to a radio station overseas that double standards were being adopted for the Sinhala and Tamil people by law enforcement authorities both for affording protection as well as enforcing the law.

President Kumaratunga has announced a full inquiry into the matter. She has after a cabinet meeting suspended all the security staff attached to the centre. What is expected in this matter at this stage is two fold. Firstly adequate compensation to be paid to the injured and the next of kin of those killed.

Secondly prompt and stern action in apprehending and punishing those responsible particularly those who masterminded the massacre. If necessary provisions of the PTA as well and emergency regulations should be utilised. By doing so the government may be able to rectify the situation partially at least.

A communal conflagration

The 1983 July prison massacres in Colombo where 32 detainees were

killed, on July 25th and 19 more two days later on 27th was perceived to be an aberration possible only under the former inhumane regime under President Jayawardene. But after Kumaratunga became president and the enlightened professor Peiris became Justice Minister attacks on Tamil detainees have occurred regularly in Welikada, Magazine, Kalutara and Boossa prisons. Most of them were due to the conduct of prison staffers.

Various inquiries were undertaken but not one person has been penalised. The same pattern is now visible with the added worry of a 1983 type situation happening again. Unless the Kumaratunga government gets its act together a communal conflagration is very much on the cards.

In the final analysis the government must take responsibility for the barbaric massacre at Bandarawela. A statement issued by the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), sums up the situation aptly: "The TULF severely condemns the brutal attack on Tamil detainees at the rehabilitation camp at Bindunuwewa, Bandarawela, in which 25 detainees have been killed and many others grievously injured. The condition of many of the injured persons is set to be serious. The manner in which the attack has been carried out is clearly suggestive of collaboration between officials at the camp and persons outside the camp who have planned and prepared to carry out the attack.

"Eventually a mob armed with dangerous weapon has carried out the attack. No efforts have been made to resist the attack, and to provide protection to the detainees. This strongly supports the view that there was collaboration between officials at the camp and the outsiders who planned the attack. The security forces arrived at the camp only after the attackers had left.

"One needs to know why the security forces could not arrive at the camp earlier and repulse the attackers. It is a severe indictment on the country's capacity to provide protection to all her citizens, that Tamil detainees held under government custody for the purpose of rehabilitation should be massacred in this manner. The least that can be done

is to conduct a thorough impartial investigation into all the circumstances relating to this inhuman attack and to bring the offenders before the law.

"Sadly our experience is that while condemnation and assurances of impartial investigation are easily forthcoming, the end result is that no tangible action is taken and the offenders carry on with a sense of impunity. The TULF also strongly urges that substantial compensation be paid by government to the families of those who have been killed and to those who have been injured while in government custody."

Rehabilitating LTTE youth

The Sri Lankan Foreign ministry has published a colourful booklet titled "Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: The Sri Lankan case". This booklet was distributed in large numbers to delegates attending the International Conference on war affected children at Winnipeg, Canada from September 10 - 17, this year. An excerpt from it states: "The government of Sri Lanka has paid considerable attention to the aspect of rehabilitating and meeting the needs of LTTE child soldiers/youths who surrender. This process which has been in operation since 1996 was initially supervised under a special Presidential Committee on 'Safety and Welfare of LTTE Child Soldiers' which was part of the Presidential Task Force on Human Disaster Management. Two rehabilitation centres had been set up for this purpose. One for male children in Bindunuwewa, Bandarawela and another for female children, named 'Methsevana' in Ganguawila, Boralasgamuwa."

The booklet also says that "In order to carry out a more comprehensive rehabilitation programme, with the aim of reintegrating these children into society, a multi-sectional steering committee chaired by Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar was constituted by President Chandrika Kumaratunga in November 1999." It further notes that a Four pronged action plan was drawn up to rehabilitate child surrendees, encourage other youngsters to surrender through assurances of proper rehabilitation and care, build an international

(continued on next page)

Journalist Killing Widely Condemned

Mayilvaganam Nimalarajan, 38, the only journalist reporting to the international media on war events from the Jaffna peninsula, was killed late night on 19 October in a gunshot and grenade attack on his residence.

A group of unidentified men arrived at his house situated within a highly fortified security zone in Jaffna town and threatened, at knifepoint, Nimalarajan's father who opened the door. One gunman entered the house and pumped three bullets into the journalist who was listening to the BBC Tamil programme Tamil Osai while writing a news story. He was killed instantly. The assassins before departing had thrown two grenades into the house which exploded injuring seriously Nimalarajan's father Sangarapillai Mailvaganam (65), mother Lily Sangarapillai (62) and nephew Prasanna Jeganathan (11). Nimalarajan

was the father of three young children.

Minutes before, Nimalarajan and his wife Parimilashanthi (30) had heard the sound of dogs barking outside the house and come out to see whether any stranger was around the house, but noticing nothing unusual they retired to their usual chores.

The area around the house situated behind the Jaffna Kachcheri was engulfed in darkness as the regular powercut was on while the routine night curfew was in force.

The journalist's wife, retired to bed with their youngest daughter. "I heard a loud explosion almost as I went to bed. I rushed to Nimalarajan's room. I saw him in a pool of blood. I rushed to my father-in-law's room and again found him also in a pool of blood," Parimilashanthi told newsmen. According to Parimilashanthi, two days before the

(Continued from page 6)

coalition against the recruitment of children by the LTTE and prevent recruitment of children and youth by the LTTE.

Stepping stone to society

According to the booklet an appeal for international assistance in this regard by Kadirgamar to the diplomatic corps and UN representatives in Sri Lanka had been well received and assistance had begun coming in. As a result facilities at the Bindunuwewa centre had been improved and a special project had been undertaken at the Don Bosco Technical Centre in Negombo to enhance its capacity so as to absorb and provide technical skills to those coming from these rehabilitation centres as a 'stepping stone to their reintegration into society.'

It is quite evident therefore that the rehabilitation centre at Bindunuwewa was an important aspect in the government's military effort against the LTTE. It was a project that received maximum attention and support of President Kumaratunga and Foreign Minister Kadir-

gamar. It seems however that despite the laudable intentions professed by the government they were designed more for international consumption and propaganda rather than actual positive results on ground.

Cruel jokes

In the light of what happened at Bindunuwewa the lofty sentiments expressed like 'Safety and welfare of child soldiers', 'rehabilitation', 'reintegration into society' etc. seem cruel jokes. Nevertheless a government that held up the Bindunuwewa project for propaganda purposes has to bear full responsibility for the tragic massacre too.

Moreover its inability to protect youngsters being rehabilitated at a correctional facility is a terrible moral and legal indictment. Furthermore the recurrence of such incidents where Tamil detainees are killed in custody raises serious doubts about the efficiency as well as legitimacy of the 'Sinhala' dominated state to maintain law and order for all of its citizens regardless of ethnicity. More importantly it has raised the spectre of July 1983 again. ●

killing he had told friends and a Tamil politician in Colombo that his life was in danger as an ex-militant group was unhappy about his reporting about election malpractices.

Braving heavy odds, Nimalarajan had been reporting on war related developments for the BBC Sinhala and Tamil Service radio broadcasts as well as Ravaya and Virakesari newspapers.

Nimalarajan had been extensively covering the Jaffna situation including alleged widespread rigging and problems of people displaced by war and was known to have been associated with the Colombo-based Committee for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV).

Nimalarajan had been reporting for foreign media for more than six years. In a twist of irony, he had already breathed his last, when his last dispatch on shooting of a Sri Lankan airforce helicopter-gunship by LTTE earlier in the day was being broadcast by the BBC Tamil Service.

The murder of Nimalarajan has attracted widespread condemnation within and outside the country. President Kumaratunga condemning the killing of the journalist ordered a full investigation. Many have directed the blame for the journalist's assassination at the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP) led by Douglas Devananda who after the recent elections has become a cabinet Minister. Devananda has categorically denied the accusation in a lengthy interview to the press in which has suggested that the LTTE might have been responsible for the murder of the journalist. But his denial has not convinced the critics.

A senior Tamil political leader, V. Anandasangari MP of the TULF in the peninsula alleged that there was reason to suspect that this attack was the handiwork of the only militant group, namely the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP). Condemning the killing, the TULF MP called for the disarming of armed Tamil groups: "I wish to reiterate my demand for disarming all groups that claim to have returned to the democratic stream. It is because of this confused situation crimes of this nature go undetected. As long as the armed group's presence is there no one will dare

to come forward to give evidence. I call upon the Government to leave no stone unturned to bring the assailants to book. If we fail to restore democracy in this country at least at this juncture the country will soon get ruined."

The Free Media Movement, a Colombo-based media watchdog, said it suspected the former Tamil militant group, EPDP for the murder. "There appears to be a clear nexus between the murder and the threats received by the victim from the EPDP," the Movement said. Condemning the killing FMM said, "Mr. Nimalarajan was a courageous journalist of the highest calibre who had remained in Jaffna through a series of political changes. Throughout the time that Jaffna was under the control of the LTTE, to the period under the Indian Peace-Keeping Forces, and through the various subsequent changes he continued to report from Jaffna, disregarding the intimidation he had to face, bringing the true situation of the north to people in Sri Lanka and abroad. Journalists in Jaffna said Nimalarajan had recently filed reports criticising the EPDP for filing reports for its recourse to electoral malpractices during the recently held elections."

The murder of Nimalarajan, BBC Jaffna reporter, is a dastardly crime committed to silence the voice of censure, truth and justice. He has paid the highest penalty for his indomitable and intrepid exposures of social and political misdemeanours. He is perhaps the first Northern journalist who has sacrificed his life to uphold truth, human values and dignity. The void created by his murder can never be adequately filled, a statement made by S. Kathirgamathamby, President, North Sri Lanka Journalists' Association, said.

The Editors' Guild of Sri Lanka in denouncing the journalist's killing said, "We welcome the statement of the new Media Minister who has vehemently condemned this cowardly murder and demand a thorough, impartial and speedy investigation into Mr. Nimalarajan's murder so that the culprits, whoever they may be, are prosecuted according to the laws of the Republic."

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) in a letter to President Kuma-

NIMALARAJAN - A TRIBUTE

A Monumental Loss

Ajith Samaranayake

The killing of M. Nimalarajan under circumstances still shrouded in mystery and doubt removes perhaps the last link between Jaffna and the South, between the embattled Tamil heartland and the Colombo metropolis where decisions are made about war and politics.

What is more as the freelance correspondent for several print and electronic organisations primarily the BBC, Nimalarajan had a global reach as well. For many of these organisations he was their eyes and ears in what has almost become another country.

But Nimalarajan was more than a journalist on the lookout for a pound or a dollar. He was a deeply humane young man whose commitments went beyond his journalistic concerns. He was deeply troubled by the war and the deteriorating ethnic conflict and sought to make connections with organisations and individuals in the South on a common wavelength. He was therefore both journalist and activist and most of all a man with a conscience. His mastery of both Tamil and Sinhala he devoted to the cause of humanity. His loss is monumental.

I can still recall our first meeting

in 1995 at the Gnanam's Hotel in Jaffna during the period of the cessation of hostilities between the Government and the LTTE. A group of us which included Victor Ivan, D. Sivaram and the BBC's Anandi were in Jaffna during the truce. On our first day Nimalarajan turned up bright and early as we were having breakfast. From then he was our guide, philosopher and friend not forgetting to treat us to toddy either.

The brutal killing of Nimalarajan, the serious injuries inflicted on his family and the damage to their house where he had entertained numerous visitors from the South is an indictment on us all, self-satisfied politicians and journalists alike.

Here was a man who opted to remain, to observe, report and monitor when he could easily have found a job in the South with his knowledge of the languages and Tamil politics. His killing therefore is not merely that of a reporter in a war zone, but also the plucking away of a brave man who did not flaunt his bravery but was the very epitome of modesty. Soft-spoken and humble to a fault he will nevertheless qualify for a place in the hall of fame in this still blood-spattered land.

ratunga said, "CPJ appreciates the announcement that you have ordered defence authorities to initiate an immediate inquiry into the assassination. As a nonpartisan organization of journalists dedicated to the defence of press freedom around the world, CPJ is deeply saddened by the assassination of our colleague. Nimalarajan was an extraordinarily courageous journalist, working at great personal risk to report on the consequences of the civil war on residents of the Jaffna peninsula...."

In a letter sent to the Sri Lankan minister of defence and president of the Republic, Chandrika Kumaratunga, Reporters Sans Frontières (Reporters Without Borders - RSF) expressed its

profound indignation after the murder of Myilvaganam Nimalarajan. The press freedom organisation asked Chandrika Kumaratunga to "intervene personally in order that the security services may identify the persons responsible for this cowardly killing". "If the guilty persons are not identified and punished, no independent journalist will be able to feel safe in Sri Lanka", stated Robert Ménard, general secretary of RSF. "Impunity of journalists' murders has already lasted too long. To prove its credibility the government has to guarantee the protection of information professionals throughout the country," added Robert Ménard. RSF noted that at least 31 journalists have been killed in Sri Lanka since 1988 in practising their profession.

Election Flawed says CMEV

The Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) has concluded its analysis of the violence and violations that took place throughout the country on election day, October 10, 2000. CMEV stands by its preliminary report submitted to the Elections Commissioner in which the appeal was made to annul the poll in 17 electoral divisions comprising 1081 polling centres, since the nature and extent of violence in these electoral divisions was such as to irrevocably mar the outcome of the poll.

CMEV wrote to the Election Commissioner that the nature and extent of violations have been so widespread and serious in the following electorates as to render the final outcome in these areas utterly meaningless. In addition, the level and degree of violence in these areas during the campaign period too was higher than in other parts of the

country, CMEV, therefore, urged the Commissioner of Elections, by virtue of the powers vested in him by Sections 48 A, 128 and 129, of the Parliamentary Elections Act No 1 of 1981 to annul the voting in these electoral divisions, in order to restore credibility to the electoral process in other regions of the country.

Though these areas were the most violent, election-rigging was not confined to these areas. CMEV received reports of serious election violations, including instances of murder, bombing, stuffing of ballot boxes, removal of ballot boxes, systematic impersonation and ballot rigging, threats and intimidation of both polling agents and voters, and the use of firearms including automatic weapons, as well as the misuse of state resources including military vehicles and personnel, from 578 polling centres in 101 electorates.

This constitutes approximately 6% of all polling centres in the country, and is 11% of the 5203 centres monitored by CMEV in all 22 districts.

In considering this information, it is clear that at the very least the Kandy District needs to be re-pollled if any semblance of faith in the democratic process is to be maintained. For instance, the majority of the winning party in the Kandy District is one-fifth of the votes cast in the 182 flawed polling centres CMEV monitored in the district.

It is CMEV's considered assessment that taken as a whole the 2000 General Election was significantly marred by violence and election-related violations. In addition, the ongoing offensive in the Jaffna peninsula, as well as the de facto deprivation of voting rights to approximately 250,000 Tamil voters in so-called uncleared areas in the North-East Province has resulted in the election being a fraud in this province. In the rest of the country, 35 of CMEV's monitors and observers were threatened and intimidated by supporters of the People's Alliance.

Mrs Bandaranaike Buried With Honours

Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike, 84, known internationally as the first woman Prime Minister in the world, died shortly after casting her vote in Sri Lanka's general election on 10 October. She fell ill on her return to Colombo from her home town of Nittambuwa, 25 miles northeast of the city.

To booms of a 19-gun salute, regiments of Sri Lanka's three armed forces led Bandaranaike's flag-draped casket on a gun carriage in a procession outside the grounds of her family estate in Nittambuwa.

The funeral brought the war-torn island to virtual standstill as Sri Lankans watched the final farewell to "the mother of the nation" on television. The funeral was the culmination of officially declared two days of national mourning for the shy housewife

turned three-time prime minister.

Mrs B or Sriva, as she was popularly called, was buried alongside her husband S W R D Bandaranaike on the family estate, called Horogolla.

Mourners included Indian Vice President Krishna Kant, foreign dignitaries and local political leaders. World leaders, including Indian President K.R. Narayanan and Chinese Premier Li Peng, had sent condolence messages and tributes to Bandaranaike who was widely known and well respected.

Hailing from a wealthy feudal family, Mrs Bandaranaike succeeded her husband after he became victim of the first political assassination in modern Sri Lanka. He was shot dead by a Buddhist monk at their home in Rosmead Place in Colombo in September 1959. She accepted a call by her husband's

supporters to head the Sri Lanka Freedom Party he founded and led it to victory in the July 1960 elections. Mrs B made history on July 21, 1960, when she was appointed the first female prime minister of the Indian Ocean island. She governed the country as Prime Minister for 12 of the years between 1960 and 1977.

Mrs B was constantly hounded and politically victimised during the 17-year regime under the United National party which came to power in July 1977 under the leadership of President Junius Jayawardene who masterminded her expulsion from parliament in 1980 and stripped her of her civic rights for five years.

Mrs B re-entered parliament when her daughter Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga led the Peoples Alliance to victory in the August 1994 election. Upon her daughter becoming President of the country following her victory in November 1994, Mrs B was appointed Prime Minister. She stepped down on August 10 this year due to poor health.

Living with the ebb and flow of war

BBC South Asia correspondent Mike Wooldridge

14 October - For the flight to the Jaffna Peninsula you report to a military airport in the suburbs of Colombo. The Antonov transport plane is waiting on the tarmac. We are due to fly at dawn.

The monsoon weather has closed in again and we are delayed. So are flights to other airfields in the region where the military are fighting what is generally regarded as the world's deadliest guerrilla movement and I watch the silent, expressionless, soldiers who are also waiting to fly.

This war has cost perhaps 60,000 lives on all sides. There has been a sharp increase in casualties in the last few months since the Tigers launched a fresh offensive to recapture the Jaffna Peninsula and government forces tried to push them back. It doesn't take much

imagination to know what is in the soldiers' minds.

The weather eventually clears and we are on our way.

The army acknowledges that the Tigers can target the periphery of Jaffna's sole air base with their artillery. They also apparently have anti-aircraft missiles.

When the Antonov lands, the engines are kept running as we scramble off and troops leaving Jaffna scramble on. The plane is airborne again within minutes.

The general who commands the Jaffna forces briefs us on his efforts to turn the conflict around. He tells us of getting the weapons he wants, of improving morale among the troops.

A journalist colleague asks if that's the case and the Tamil Tigers have al-

ways been considerably outnumbered by the government forces what has gone wrong? Why hasn't the army won?

General Wijendra draws the parallel with Vietnam, perhaps an unfortunate one as this is the eve of polling day. Fighting a guerrilla war is never easy, he says. The Tigers have the advantage of being able to choose the time and place of their attacks.

In Colombo, earlier, President Chandrika Kumaratunga had told us that the advice from her commanders was that the war in the north-east was winnable. Here, in the Tamil stronghold, General Wijendra says there can't be a total victory just by destroying the Tamil Tigers.

We set off towards the town of Jaffna. Some of the houses bear signs of neglect, the road are in need of maintenance and the number of Morris Minors, Austin A35s and other cars from the 1950s and '60s still on the road show that this is a world away from Colombo, but otherwise - apart from the military checkpoints - it's a relatively normal rural scene. Today, anyway.

We are to hear many people tell us

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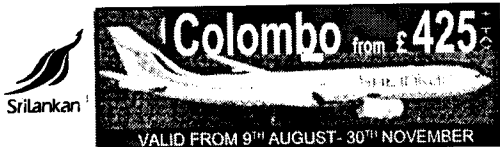
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"they're keeping quiet today". We watch polling officials collecting ballot boxes and voting papers from the Jaffna district headquarters, then board buses that set off in convoy for polling stations in the areas of the peninsula the government currently holds.

A bystander comments that they can find buses for the election but there aren't enough for people to get about ordinarily.

Still within Jaffna and no more than two or three miles from where we have just been watching this election activity, things could hardly be more different. In Colombuthurai, there are virtually no civilians to be seen, only clusters of soldiers.

We drive down a road where every house is empty and damaged, the walls are pockmarked with holes from machine gun fire and mortar rounds, coils of barbed wire are everywhere. We are warned to be extremely careful where we tread, because there are mines.

It emerges that the Tamil Tigers were here, so close to the centre of Jaffna, until mid September and were dislodged only after three days of hard, sometimes hand to hand, fighting. And, for all that, not dislodged far apparently. An officer tells us that the new "defence line" is only a mile or so away through the dense vegetation.

The people of Jaffna are used to living with the ebb and flow of the war, and under the control of both the Tamil Tigers and the government. They're used to curfews and deprivation, used to suddenly having to pack up their belongings and move out of their homes because of the fighting. There have been fresh waves of displacement this year.

The Bishop of Jaffna told me it explained the widespread lack of confidence that anything much will change as a result of this election. Hope isn't indeed much in evidence from talking to people in the streets.

We flew out of Jaffna with the plane's lights out and it stayed that way until we were beyond the territory where the Tigers operate. Just in case.

We heard that the next day, polling day, wasn't so quiet in Jaffna and more shelling was reported. A reminder, if one were needed, that the election may not have preoccupied the people of Jaffna - but the war preoccupies the politics of this island nation.

Tamil Tigers Hit Strategic Port

Tamil Tiger suicide squads attacked the north-eastern port of Trincomalee destroying two naval vessels and shooting down a helicopter gunship on 23 October. The attackers also fired several rounds of mortar bombs at a nearby military facility while the attack on the Trincomalee port was under way.

The port of Trincomalee was safe, Karunaratne said. Trincomalee is one of the finest natural harbors in South Asia.

In a statement the LTTE said that they used six "Black Tiger" suicide boats to carry out the pre-dawn attack. But military officials said only four boats were used, three of which were attacked and sunk before they could cause any damage. However, one other managed to slip in and ram against a navy gunboat and another vessel used for transporting troops. An Mi-24 helicopter that was going to the aid of the sailors was brought down near Trincomalee.

The naval encounter in the Trincomalee harbour started when navy troops spotted four rebel boats approaching the port at daybreak and the two sides exchanged fire, Karunaratne said. One of the rebel boats rammed in-to the personnel carrier, he said. The three other rebel boats took direct hits from navy fire and exploded in the water.

Karunaratne said there were at least two rebels in each of the boats and all were killed. At least seven security personnel, including the helicopter crew, were killed and more than 40 wounded in the attack which military officials blamed on a security lapse.

A Sri Lankan navy personnel carrier anchored at Trincomalee port where the attack took place was badly damaged and sinking after it was rammed by a suicide-boat, Navy Brig. Sanath Karunaratne said. Shortly afterward, an MI-24 helicopter coming to the aid of the embattled base was shot down by the rebels six miles from Trincomalee, he said. "The chopper has fallen into the sea and the two pilots and two gunners are dead," Karunaratne said.

Karunaratne said navy divers had recovered the bodies of two of the four

airmen whose helicopter was shot down. He said troops had recovered the bodies of three rebels on 24 October, taking the number of LTTE dead from the attack to 13. However the Tigers said in a statement six suicide bombers had died in the attack on the boats in the harbour.

Following the attack, the port was closed for civilians as well as civilian employees of the navy a "search operation is under way for rebel infiltrators," according to a navy spokesman he added.

The attack has been treated as highly significant because it took place in a high-security facility. "This is a very serious breach of security," said one senior military officer. "It's bad enough that the LTTE managed to get into the high security zone in the harbour. That they were able to sufficiently infiltrate Marble Beach to set up mortar positions is unthinkable," he said.

An investigation has been launched to determine how the rebel boats were able to breach the navy's defences.

There have been many previous rebel attacks against Trincomalee - an important strategic location for the navy where all craft patrolling Sri Lanka's north-eastern waters are based. They have usually been carried out by the LTTE's naval wing - the Sea Tigers. In June a navy gunboat was sunk by suicide bombers leaving five dead. In April 1995 rebels launched a suicide attack on Trincomalee port, destroying two navy gunboats at the beginning of the current round of fighting between government forces and the Tigers.

A press release from the LTTE said, "Two Sri Lankan naval vessels - a gun boat and a troop carrier - were destroyed another two passenger ships were badly damaged and a Russian built MI24 helicopter gunship was shot down when the Naval Wing of the Liberation Tigers launched a major assault on the strategic Trincomalee harbour today. Scores of naval personnel were killed and injured in the attack.

"Sea Tiger gunboats and Black Sea Tiger assault boats entered the well guarded Trincomalee harbour around

(continued on next page)

'TULF not for a separate State'

The Tamil United Liberation Front vice-president and parliamentary leader, Mr. V. Anandasangaree, has said his party would renew its campaign both within and outside Parliament for an end to the war, negotiations with the LTTE and a political solution based on the constitutional reforms proposed by the President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, in 1995.

In an interview with The Hindu on 23 October, Mr. Anandasangaree said the 1995 proposals needed only a "few rectifications" and that if Ms. Kumaratunga was sincere about bringing a political solution to resolve the conflict, she would revert back to those proposals.

"The TULF is not asking for a separate State. We are only asking for a federal set-up with wide powers to the regions. If the President is sensible enough to go back to the 1995 proposals which she thought were reasonable at that time, it would be a good step," he said. After a long gap the TULF is representing Jaffna in Parliament. Three of

its members were elected from the district in the recent elections, giving it the much-needed political foothold in the peninsula. In addition, it has two members from Batticaloa.

The TULF leader admitted it would be "very difficult" for the party to pursue its agenda given the limited number of seats it had in Parliament, but said it would mobilise opinion within and outside the country to bring pressure on the Government to stop the war and begin talks with the LTTE.

"There is a strong public opinion in the Sinhalese community also that does not want war. Ninety per cent of the Sinhalese also want to stop the war. If necessary, we have to get their support also. There is also international public opinion, on which we have to depend," he said.

Mr. Anandasangaree said he was "more than satisfied" with the result considering the Government's support to the EPDP "to help it win as many seats as possible". "The Government gave the group full control over the

administration, to appoint a Government Agent (highest civilian authority in a district), assistant government agents. The Government gave them lakhs of rupees, merely for the asking, from the rehabilitation fund. So Douglas Devananda (EPDP leader) had the advantage of making grants to rural development societies, community centres, libraries... The official media also helped him."

He accused the EPDP of impersonating voters who were no longer in the peninsula but whose names were still on the rolls and said his party would have won "eight out of the nine seats in the peninsula" had it been a free and fair election.

Besides attacking the EPDP for alleged electoral malpractice and armed thuggery, Mr. Anandasangaree also explained why his party was not able to put up a better showing.

He blamed the All Ceylon Tamil Congress for fragmenting Tamil votes. He also criticised the "carefree attitude" of the Tamils for frittering their votes on "all sorts of parties", and in Batticaloa of not displaying "enough interest" to ensure the success of a Tamil party. The TULF managed to scrape together barely enough votes for two seats in the district where it won three seats in 1994.

The TULF might have fared better had it not been for the threat he and his party members faced from the LTTE.

Denying that the TULF had been reduced to a mouthpiece of the LTTE, he said: "It is a wrong view. Even two weeks before the election, two high-ranking policemen came to see me in Jaffna and said I was at high risk from the LTTE and warned me to be careful. They asked me not to move about. If this is true, the theory that we are agents of the LTTE is absurd. We would have done very much better if we were sure that the LTTE would not interfere with the elections."

(Continued from page 11)

5.30a.m after an intense mortar attack on naval facilities from Marble Beach on the southern side of Trincomalee Bay. A fierce sea battle broke out inside the naval yard. Two Black Sea Tiger assault boats rammed into a gunboat and a troop carrier and both caught fire and sunk. Heavy fighting continued for nearly three hours. Heavy mortar shelling from Marble Beach 15 kilometres southwest of Trincomalee badly damaged two passenger ships inside the harbour.

"Heavy fighting broke out near Marble Beach when the army and the naval units engaged the Sea Tiger commandos unleashing mortar fire on the harbour. Several Sri Lankan soldiers were killed and wounded in the fighting. A Russian built MI24 helicopter gunship, which came to assist the ground troops near Marble Beach, was brought down by an anti-aircraft missile.

"Six Black Tiger commandos were killed in the fighting inside Trincomalee harbour."

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Peoples Alliance in Uneasy Coalition with Minority Parties

● A New Government

After a week-long haggling which included the breaking of protocol and visiting late M. H. M. Ashraff's mourning widow Ferial at her home, President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga installed her cabinet at the auspicious time of 10.30 a.m. on October 19. Six days earlier she swore Ratnasiri Wickremanayake as the Prime Minister.

The wrangle was with the National Unity Alliance (NAU), the front Sri Lanka Muslim Congress's late leader Ashraff had formed to give him a national image, whose co-leader Rauff Hakeem was keen on wresting maximum concessions and was insisting on a written Memorandum of Understanding. The President who conceded the ministerial demands of the NAU found it difficult to sign a Memorandum of Understanding due to intense opposition from her senior colleagues.

President Kumaratunga went to meet Ferial, the other co-leader, to get over the hurdle placed by Hakeem and succeeded in her effort. Ferial who pledged NAU's support to the President told her that she was opposed to demanding portfolios and placing conditions. "My husband trusted you and told me that you would treat the minority communities well. I place the same trust in you," she told the President.

She was also obliged to satisfy all her partners in the People's Alliance (PA) and the EPDP, the other coalition partner. She satisfied the NAU by giving to Hakeem the powerful Trade Ministry and reserving the Eastern Province Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Ministry to Ferial. She would be sworn in when she comes out of mourning in 4 months.

EPDP leader Douglas Devananda desired the Northern Province Reconstruction and North-East Tamil Affairs and it was given to him. Then there were MEP's Dinesh Gunawardene, Communist Party's Indika Gunawardene, UNP crossovers Dr. Sarath Amu-

nugama, Ronnie de Mel, Wijeyapala Mendis, CWC's Arumugam Thondaman and LSSP's Batty Weerakoon. She pampered all of them. She accommodated all the former ministers who returned to parliament, promoted ten of her former junior ministers and introduced a few new faces. She has a cabinet of 44 ministers, more than a third of her 116-member crew. At least another 44 will be inducted as junior ministers. Her's is the biggest cabinet in independent Sri Lanka.

Though President Kumaratunga set a bad precedent in forming the largest cabinet, the parliament which met on October 18, began its sessions on a positive note. It elected the Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees unanimously. The move originated from the UNP which wanted to propose one of its senior member Anura Bandaranaike to that high office. UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe conveyed their decision to the Prime Minister And asked whether the government would support their nominee. The government responded positively and the Prime Minister offered to propose Anura Bandaranaike's name. Wickremesinghe, the Leader of the Opposition, seconded.

"I am glad the 11th Parliament had begun its sessions on a consensual note. I would like this cooperation continue," Wickremesinghe wished.

Encouraged by this consensus the UNP Parliamentary Group decided on October 18 to work out national consensus on measures to strength democracy in the country and to find ways and means to end the war. Said Wickremesinghe at the group meeting: "We will begin the process of talking to other parties about brining the war to an end."

The Prime Minister who said "Norway's role is over," and the President who affirmed that stand by saying that "Norway's offer is on hold" have sent Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar to Oslo on October 16 to ask Norway to resume its peace effort.

Kadirgamar told his Norwegian counterpart that what was said in the past three weeks were all uttered in the heat of the election.

● Election Results

The Eleventh parliament that will begin its life on October 18 will have the following composition. People's Alliance (PA) will have 94 elected members and 13 National List members making a total of 107 of which 5 are from Sri Lanka Muslim Congress/ National Unity Alliance, 3 from Ceylon Workers Congress, 3 from Mahajana Eksath Peramuna, 3 from the Communist Party and one from the LSSP. The balance 92 members are from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party.

The government had obtained the support of the 4 members of the National Unity Alliance and 5 members of the EPDP thus making the total 116. In actual fact the strength of the National Unity Alliance (NUA) is 9 and with the representation it is expecting from PA National List NUA's strength will rise either to 10 or 11. This situation is stressed by political commentators and is being increasingly voiced by the people. They say "Hakeem and Douglas" are going to rule the country.

Hakeem, on October 13, a Thursday, had three meetings, one with the politbureau members of the SLMC, the next with the UNP leaders Ranil Wickremesinghe and Karu Jayasuriya and the third with President Kumaratunga. By the time he went for the politbureau meeting he had had feelers from the President and the UNP. He told the President's men that he would agree to support the PA if three cabinet portfolios, three deputy ministers and some other perks like diplomatic posts and top government appointments are given. "these could be settled at the meeting with the President," the President's man assured.

Hakeem opened the politbureau meeting with a statement about the PA violence and vote rigging in the Kandy electorate where he contested. He told the meeting how Muslim voters were prevented from voting. He specifically mentioned the incident that occurred at Akurana. "In the night some thugs went round and collected the polling cards," he said. "The moulavi saw the thugs and raised alarm using the Mosque loud-speaker. They then ran away," he

added.

Delegates from other areas also related similar instances and that the anti-Muslim PA should be taught a lesson. They insisted that all forces supporting democracy should form a government and prevent the PA from coming to power. "By that way the party could honour the last wish of our leader," they said and added that they should never join a government in which Fowzie would be made a minister.

Hakeem went to meet the UNP leaders at Wickremesinghe office. At that meeting Wickremesinghe made his position clear. He said he was only interested in forming an interim government for the purpose of strengthening democracy. He would enact legislation to establish an Independent Elections Commission, an Independent Public Service Commission, an Independent Judicial Commission and an Independent Police Commission and the go to polls. This he would do after the completion of the first year of the life of the Eleventh Parliament. The present constitution prevents the dissolution of Parliament before the end of the first year of the life of Parliament. Hakeem

then asked for three cabinet portfolios and four deputy minister posts which requests Wickremesinghe agreed to consider favourably. Hakeem said he would consult the party and come back.

Next, he went to meet the President. He told her of his meeting with Wickremesinghe and bargained for cabinet posts. He was offered two ministers and three deputy minister posts. He then asked the president to enact legislation to establish the four commissions Wickremesinghe had talked about. She pointed out that they were part of the government's constitutional proposals and undertook to enact them. He pledged his support to her government and announced it to the media on Friday 14 October soon after Ratnasiri Wickremesinghe was sworn in as the Prime Minister.

Devananda received invitation to join the government on Thursday October 14. He was airlifted to Colombo to enable him to meet the President in the night. Devananda pledged his support to the President and then made three requests: a Ministry for North-East Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, Interim Administration for the North

and East and the permanent merger of the north and east. He received positive response.

There were also demands for cabinet portfolios from Dinesh Gunawardene's MEP, Communist Party and the LSSP.

● **Conflicting Stances**

Hakeem, in his interviews to the media had highlighted the conflict of stances among the parties in the government. He said: "I am totally opposed to what the PM had said during the campaign." By that he referred to what Prime Minister Wickramanayake said about not talking to the LTTE and destroying it militarily.

He also said he was for the reintroduction of the government's constitution reform proposals to which the Prime Minister and Dinesh Gunewardene are reported to be totally opposed. Devananda holds the view that the government's scheme to devolve power to the regions are inadequate to meet the aspirations of the Tamil people and wants the permanent merger of the north and east, which is anathema to the Buddhist Sangha which the Prime

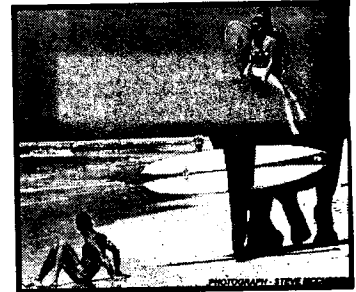


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Minister wants to placate.

● The Campaign

Three days after she failed on August 12 in its gamble to enact the new constitution embodying its scheme to devolve power to the provinces as part of its effort to find a solution to the 17-year-old ethnic war President Chandrika Kumaratunga Bandaranaike dissolved parliament and fixed October 10 for fresh elections. The main rivals for power, the ruling People's Alliance and the main opposition United National Party flung headlong into an intense campaign to win the support of the people.

The main issue at the commencement of the campaign was economic, the government claiming that it had managed the economy well- increased the per capita income of the people to US\$ 840, brought down inflation and the budget deficit and had created more employment. The UNP countered by saying that the government had mismanaged the economy, the cost of living had risen, unemployment had risen and the standard of life of the common man had eroded. It promised all out salary increases to help ease the common man's burden. President Kumaratunga did a quick calculation of the amount of money that would be required to fulfill UNP's salary rise promise - about Rs. 90 billion a year - and showed that the UNP was not serious of its promise.

The UNP knowing very well that its 35% - 38% voter base could not be eroded went in for minority, especially Tamil votes to boost its voter strength. It announced that it would scale down the war, talk to the LTTE, supply food and medicine to the areas under LTTE's control and remove the hardships of the Tamil people living in the south. Realizing the difficulty of matching this offer and that the Tamil support is with the UNP the PA went in for the Sinhala votes. President Kumaratunga persuaded her ailing mother Sirimavo Bandaranaike to resign from the post of prime minister and appointed Ratnasiri Wickremnayake, described by some as a Sinhala chauvinist, to succeed her. Through him the PA launched a virulent campaign to paint the UNP as a LTTE ally. The Prime Minister charged that the UNP was hand and glove with the LTTE. He challenged UNP leader Wickremesinghe to deny his charge. He

added that the LTTE wants the UNP to win.

Five days prior to the election the Prime Minister released at a hurried press conference a document which he called the annexure to a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the UNP and the LTTE. The newsmen refused to believe it as it bore no signature and its front part was missing. "Do you say this document is genuine?" a newsman asked. Prime Minister Wickremnayake dodged the question saying: "I do not say it is genuine. Looking at its contents and what is actually happening it looks genuine."

The document laid down the various steps the UNP and the LTTE would take prior to the election and after the election. Prior to the election the UNP should announce that it would scale down the war, talk to the LTTE and agree to an interim administration for the northeast region.

"Why did you bring it before us in a hurry without satisfying yourself about its genuineness?" another media man queried. "We got at this document about three hours ago. We thought we should place it before the nation," the Prime minister answered.

A flaw in the document showed. Annexure was spelt Annexture. Wickremesinghe said this was a normal spelling mistake made by the President's staff. Sunday Leader newspaper commented: "LTTE never makes such spelling mistakes in its letters and communications."

● Violence

The election was marked by widespread violence against rival candidates and their supporters, intimidation of voters and stuffing of ballot boxes and bitter intra-party rivalry for preferences. The Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) said that it recorded 1726 incidents of violence of which 940 were major and 786 minor, at the close of the October 10 election campaign.

The run upto the poll became increasingly violent and during the last week 664 incidents were reported. The 33-day election campaign resulted in an average of 52.3 incidents while the last week averaged 99.4 incidents per day.

The worst incidents were recorded in the Central Province where the accusing finger was pointed at the Deputy

Minister for Defence, Anurudha Ratwatte and his son. Complaints against them were made by PA General Secretary D. M. Jayaratne and Hakeem. A Deputy Inspector General of Police reported to President Kumaratunga that a notorious underworld thug was seen in the Kandy district and she ordered his arrest. It was reported that six groups of Colombo's underworld men had gone to Kandy to work for the minister.

Large scale rigging and malpractices were reported in Kandy, Kurunegala, Matara, Galle, Nuwara Eliya, Anuradhapura, Puttalam and Jaffna districts. There was rigging in Colombo too but it made little impact in view of the large number of voters and UNP's huge support.

● Voting

As forecast by poll analysts and gallop polls the voting was very close with the PA collecting 3,900,901 votes against UNP's 3,477,770 votes and JVP's 518,774 votes. Percentage wise this was 45.1% for the PA and 40.21 for the UNP and 6% for the JVP. Compared to the 1994 election both the PA and the UNP recorded a drop in their vote bank while the JVP had showed a marked improvement. In 1994 the percentages were PA- 48.94, UNP- 44.04 and JVP- 1.13.

UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, who contested the Colombo district, garnered the highest 363,668 preferential votes on October 10 election. UNP president Karu Jayasuriya, collect in Gampaha 257,387 preferential votes. Four candidates, besides Wickremesinghe, harvested over a lakh of preferential votes. They are Prof. G. L. Peiris (139,123), Dinesh Gunawardene (114,295), A. H.M. Fowzie (100,200 (all PA) and Ravi Karunanayake (145,593 (UNP). Colombo district is the most populous electorate with 1.3 million registered voters. In Gampaha, the second most populous district, besides Karu Jayasuriya, Susil Premajayanth (165,905) and Jeyaraj Fernando (1238,252), both PA, exceeded one lakh of preferential votes. The other seven candidates who obtained more than 100,000 preferential votes were: Ratnasiri Wickremnayake (148,705-P.A), Kalutara, Richard Pathirana (114,658-P.A), Galle, Anurudha Ratwatte (152,151-P.A). Kandy, Kehiliya Rambukwela (154,403-UNP0, Kandy,

Pavithra Vanniyarachchi (108,324-P.A), Ratnapura, Gamini Athukorale (107,002-UNP). Ratnapura and Vajira Abeywardhana (104,483-UNP) Galle.

Four ministers, 10 deputy ministers and 33 other MPs suffered defeat at the election. The defeated ministers were: Kingsley Wickremeratne, Hema Ratnayake, Nanda Mathew and D.P. Wickremesinghe.

In this election a father and son, a father and daughter and two sets of brothers were elected to the new parliament. In the Matale district Alick Aluvihara and his son Ranjith Aluvihara who contested in the UNP list were elected. Dharmadasa Wanniyarachchi and his daughter Pavithra Vanniyarachchi who was Deputy Minister of Health in the former parliament, were elected as PA candidates from Ratnapura district. Indika Gunawardene, former Housing Minister and his brother Dinesh Gunawardene were elected as PA parliamentarians from the Colombo district. Mahinda Rajapaksa, former Minister of Fisheries, and his brother Samal Rajapaksa were elected on the PA list from Hambantota district.

There will be only seven women parliamentarians in the new parliament. They are: Fariel Ashraff (Digamadula), Chandrani Bandaa (Anuradhapura), Sriyani Fernando (Puttalam), Pavithra Vanniyarachchi (Ratnapura), Surangani Ellawala (Kurunegala), Amarapiya-seeli Ratnayake (Monaragala) and Sunetha Jayasena.

Two sons of famous politicians will be entering parliament for the first time. They are president Premadasa's son Sagith and the former Opposition Leader Gamini Dissanayake's son Navin, fathers of both were killed by suicide bombers, Premadasa on May 1, 1993 and Dissanayake on November 25, 1994. Navin contested his father's Nuwara Elya seat while Sajith went to the southern Hambantota and cultivated his own political base and had won the district for the UNP, regarded by political observers as an unparallel political achievement.

● **Mrs. B's Death**

World's first woman Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike passed away at the age of 84 on October 10, the election day. She was accorded a state funeral on October 16.

On the election day she went early to the polling station at Nithampuwa close to their Horogolla home. The election staff got up when she was wheeled in a wheel chair and sat down as she handed the polling card. The officer read her name: Sirimavo Ratwatte Dias Bandaranaike. As there were no objections from the polling agents the next officer went up to her and painted her little finger of the left hand with indelible ink. She was then handed over the ballot paper. She was pushed to the enclosure where an officer helped to mark the vote.

There were rumours that she voted for her son Anura Bandaranaike, a UNP candidate. But that rumour was quashed by the officer who helped her to mark the vote. He said I asked her: 'Am I to mark for the elephant or the chair?' She instructed: "Mark for the chair." The officer then asked: "For whom should I mark the preference?" She did not want to mark the preference vote. Since the time she entered politics in 1950 till her death she had been the president of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party which her husband had founded in 1952.

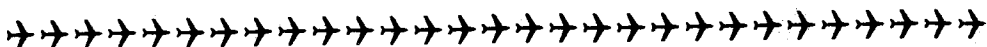
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Elections 2000 in Retrospect

D B S Jeyaraj

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga has formed a cabinet comprising 44 ministers including herself after the Island's eleventh general election held on October 10th resulted in a hung Parliament as in the case of 1994. The unusually oversized cabinet of ministers was necessitated by political compulsions as Kumaratunga had to satisfy several diverse interests and pressures to gain a working majority.

Secondly with the loyalty of many an MP being suspect in a tricky and fluid political situation the more ministers and deputy ministers she appoints the less their chances of them crossing over. With 44 ministers and their deputies at least 77% of those in government ranks would be holding office and therefore less vulnerable to fickle political choices. The poll had resulted in the Peoples Alliance led by Sri Lankan President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga coming first with 107 seats but being 6 short of the 113 required to form a simple majority in a Legislature comprising 225 representatives. The chief opposition United National Party whose leader is Ranil Wickremasinghe came second with 89 seats.

After intense behind the scene negotiations with smaller parties the PA was able to procure the support of a Muslim and Tamil party with four and five seats respectively and acquire 116 MPs to sit on the side of the Government benches. The Tamil party is the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP) which won four seats directly in Jaffna and one seat indirectly in Amparai as an Independent group candidate. The Muslim Party is the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) that contested as the newly formed National Unity Alliance (NUA) in some districts and as part of the PA in two districts. The SLMC won six seats as a component of the PA and also got two seats on the national list. The NUA won three seats plus another on the national list.

The UNP led by Wickremasinghe also staked a claim for governance. It mooted a project of forming a govern-

ment for democratisation and ethnic reconciliation. The idea was for the new government to appoint Independent commissions for elections, Public services, Judicial services and the Police and also introduce media reforms. It also wanted to lift the food, fuel and medicine embargos and ease the restrictions on fishing and agriculture in the North - East. Also the war was to be deescalated, an interim council formed and talks with the LTTE initiated. A time frame of one year was fixed after which fresh elections were to be held. The Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO), All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC) and Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) were supposedly in favour of supporting the UNP's effort to form a government. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), which for the first time secured ten seats was also sounded out, but it did not want to support the PA or UNP.

The SLMC and EPDP chose to throw in their lot with the PA paving the latter to secure an adequate majority to form the government. After some haggling over ministerial portfolios, diplomatic assignments and corporation chairperson posts a deal was struck between the SLMC and PA. SLMC co-leader Rauff Hakeem's insistence on a formal memorandum of understanding was ruled out by Mrs. Ferial Ashraff, the other co-leader.

Another unexpected turn of events was the election of Anura Bandaranaike and former Army general Sarath Munasinghe as Speaker and Deputy speaker respectively. Both were elected without a contest. What was remarkable in this was that Anura, brother of President Kumaratunga, was a UNP frontliner while Munasinghe was PA. Given the wafer thin majority of the PA the election of the Speaker was expected to be the first confrontation between government and opposition ranks. Sri Lanka has had a precedent in electing a Speaker from the opposition ranks. In 1960 March, T B Subasinghe of the SLFP was in the opposition but elected Speaker as the then

Dudley senanayake's UNP government did not have a majority. But in this instance Anura was accepted by the government as a "consensual" candidate. The arrangement was said to be a result of a rapprochement between quarrelling siblings Chandrika and Anura after their mother's death. It however fuelled speculation about a future PA-UNP national government.

The Sri Lankan electoral system was based on the British Westminster model earlier. The first past the post winner system was replaced by the Proportionate Representation scheme under the 1978 Constitution. The new PR system itself underwent a number of modifications to be what it is now. The parliamentary election

Procedure in the Island entails 22 electoral districts going to the polls and electing 196 members in the first stage. Each electoral district is divided into a certain number of electoral divisions based on population figures for administrative convenience. The voter is required to vote for the party or an Independent group of his or her choice and also cast 3 preference votes for individual candidates. Each list would have a number of candidates normally in excess of the allocated number of seats to a particular district. After votes are counted each party or group would be entitled to a certain number of seats within each district in proportion to the votes received. The party or group coming first in each district would get a single additional "bonus" seat. Thereafter candidates obtaining the highest number of preference votes within their respective lists would become MP's in descending order.

A further 29 seats would be allocated to each party or group proportionately on the basis of overall votes received on a nationwide basis. Parties are required to submit at the time of nominations a "national list" of candidates from which these MP's would be selected. The candidates in the national list do not face hustings directly.

The 2000 parliamentary election saw 5048 candidates from 29 accredited political parties and 99 Independent groups vying for 225 seats in all. 55,000 police and military personnel were deployed to guard the 9845 polling booths where a record 12,380,704 persons were expected to vote. 9,080,400 or 75.43% of the total electorate cast their votes of which 478,454 or 5.27% were rejected as spoiled votes.

8,601,948 or 94.73% of the votes were accepted as valid. The PA obtained 3,892,075 or 45.25% while the UNP got 3,463,822 or 40.27% of the votes. On this basis the PA won 94 seats directly and a further 13 on the national list making up 107 seats while the UNP got 77 seats with another 12 national lists totalling 89 in all. Both parties however registered a drop in voting percentages in comparison with the 1994 elections. Then, the PA got 48.94% of the votes and had 105 seats while the UNP had 94 seats with 44.02% of the votes.

Apart from the seats won by the PA and UNP, a further 29 were shared by seven parties. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna or Peoples Liberation Front obtained 517,620 or 6.02% of the total votes and gained ten seats comprising eight directly elected and two on the national list. The Sinhala Urumaya or Sinhala heritage party garnered 126,137 votes or 1.47% that entitled it to a solitary seat on the national list. It failed to win a single seat in any district. The Sri Lankan Muslim Congress that contested two districts on the PA symbol fielded candidates in several districts under the nomenclature of National Unity Alliance. It won four

seats including one on the national list after getting 183,790 votes or 2.14%.

Among the Tamil parties the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front retained the same number of seats it had in the outgoing Parliament. The TULF won 5 seats with 105,907 votes or 1.23% but failed to get a national list seat. The Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP) that had nine seats in the previous Parliament won four seats directly with 50,702 votes or 0.59%. It gained another indirectly when its nominee on an Independent group contesting an Eastern district also was elected thereby making the EPDP tally also five. The All Ceylon Tamil Congress got one seat with 27,289 or 0.32% while the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization got three seats on the basis 25,830 votes or 0.30%.

The peculiarities of the PR system in Sri Lanka has resulted in paradoxical situations where parties are able to get seats by virtue of getting a higher percentage in particular districts while being negligible quantities on a national scale. Likewise parties may be able to aggregate a high number of votes on a national level but fail to get a single seat because they lack sizeable

amounts in any district. This situation is of particular advantage to the minority community parties that are able to focus on particular regions and gain representation on a limited scale as in the case of the TULF, EPDP, NUA, TELO and ACTC in the current exercise. None of them except the NUA was eligible to get a national list member while the Sinhala Urumaya that gained a national list seat failed to win any seat on the district level. Interestingly the Sinhala nationalist SU split when internal divisions arose over filling the national list seat. Party president S L Gunasekera was sidelined because he was a Christian and Tilak Karunaratne the party's secretary nominated himself.

The results saw forty seven former MP's including four ministers and ten deputy ministers being defeated this time. The highest number of preference votes was recorded by UNP leader Ranil Wickremasinghe with 363,688 in Colombo district. Professor Gamini Lakshman Peiris, the government minister responsible for drafting a new Constitution was first on the PA list for Colombo with 139,123 votes. Ratnasiri Wickramanayake re-appointed as

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Prime Minister came first in Kalutara with 148,405 preference votes.

Former Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike, mother of Kumaratunga, passed away on election day. The matriarchal political figure who created a record by becoming the world's first woman Prime minister was travelling to Colombo by car after casting her vote in her hometown of Attanagalle. The 84-year-old Bandaranaike had a heart attack on the road and died when admitted to the Kadawatha hospital en route.

In keeping with the South Asian tradition of dynastic politics several MP's with family connections continued to retain their seats or won for the first time. Of the new entrants four are of noteworthy importance. Former President Ranasinghe Premadasa's son Sajith came first on the UNP list in the Southern district of Hambantota with 98,968 votes. Former Opposition Leader and UNP minister Gamini Dissanayake's son Navin won in Nuwara Eliya with 55,587 preferences. Ferial, the widow of Muslim Congress leader M H M Ashraff won in Amparai (Digamadulla) with 83,353. Surangani Ellawela won in Ratnapura with 54,517 on the PA ticket. She is the widow of former MP Nanda Ellawela and the mother of another former MP Nalanda who was gunned down in a political fracas a few years ago. Incidentally two persons charged with the killing also won from the same district on the UNP ticket. Two brothers Indika and Dinesh Gunewardene were elected from the PA in Colombo. A father and son combination Alick and Ranjith Aluvihare won from the UNP in Matale. A father and daughter duo Dharmadasa and Pavithrar Wanniaratchi were elected from the PA in Ratnapura.

The ethnic ratio of the 22 electoral districts in Sri Lanka is distributed somewhat unevenly. 10 of them, Gampaha, Matara, Galle, Hambantota, Moneragala, Kegalle, Matale, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Kurunegala are Sinhala dominated. Another six Colombo, Ratnapura, Kalutara, Puttalam, Kandy and Badulla have a Sinhala majority with significant Muslim and Tamil segments. The Nuwara-Eliya district has Tamils of recent Indian origin having a slight edge over the Sinhalese. In the East, Batticaloa has a Tamil majority and a substantive Muslim minority. Amparai district has the Muslims in a majority with Sinhala coming a

close second and Tamils trailing far behind. All three communities are more or less evenly distributed in Trincomalee with the Muslims ahead. Jaffna is near totally Tamil while the Wannai is Tamil dominated with Sinhala and Muslim minorities. The districts of Colombo, Puttalam, Gampaha, Wannai and Jaffna have significant concentrations of Tamils and Muslims.

Of these 22 districts, the PA topped in 15 including Nuwara-Eliya, Trincomalee and Amparai. The UNP came first in Colombo, Hambantota, Badulla and Polonnaruwa. The EPDP edged out the TULF in Jaffna while the latter did the same to the NUA in Batticaloa. The TELO came first in the Wannai. The UNP got seats in every district in the Country including Jaffna. The PA also won in every district except Jaffna.

A remarkable phenomenon of this poll was the emergence of the JVP as a major political force. The leftist outfit responsible for two insurgencies in 1971 and 1988-89 was suppressed by government forces in both instances. In recent times the JVP has moved somewhat to the right in terms of acquiring neo fascist tendencies while clinging on to outdated leftist cliches also. It has been critical of both major parties and their "capitulation" to the minorities. The JVP organised demonstrations against concessions being made to Tamils in the aborted draft Constitution mooted by the PA last August. It draws its support from both the rural peasantry as well as urban lumpen elements but not from the proletariat. In a significant gesture the JVP has nominated a Muslim woman as one of its two national list MP's. Its leader Somawansa Amerasinghe, in self-imposed exile in France is expected to return and take up active leadership.

The election has also seen the rise of Sinhala chauvinist outfits like the Sihala Urumaya. Lionised and given undeserved publicity by the mainstream media, the SU was reported to become the third force in Sinhala politics but fared miserably. Still it managed to win a seat on the national list. The SU however has split up thereafter with its leader S L Gunasekera, a lawyer, and eight other central committee members quitting. This was because of party objection to Gunasekera, a Christian, representing the Sinhala Buddhists in Parliament as national list MP. Instead party Secretary Tilak Karunaratne has taken his place. A related development

in this regard is the victory within the PA fold of another set of Sinhala hardliners from the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna led by Dinesh Gunewardene. Some are of the view that the MEP component, JVP and SU in association with PA hawks are likely to obstruct any meaningful action on the part of President Kumaratunga to resolve the national problem equitably.

The EPDP that had nine seats from Jaffna in the last Parliament because the majority of Jaffna voters could not exercise their franchise found its number dwindling to four in the North. The EPDP got 4 seats by polling around 41000 votes of which its stronghold Kayts provided about 12000 votes amidst controversial accusations by rival political parties. The TULF which did not contest Jaffna last time did so this time and got three seats. The oldest Tamil political party in the Island, the Tamil Congress got one seat while the UNP got the other. The Tamil Congress had been out of Parliament since 1977 while the UNP had last won from Jaffna in 1952 when Suppiapillai Natesan defeated Federal Party leader SJV Chelvanayakam in Kankesanthurai.

About 132000 voters or 21 % cast their votes in Jaffna despite the on going war. The Wannai saw the TELO win three seats. Its leader and sitting MP Adaikalanathan alias Chelvanayakam gained a lot of Catholic votes. The Muslim Congress contesting as NUA got another seat while the UNP and PA got one each.

The East saw the Muslim Congress component of the PA in Amparai (Digamadulla) district gain four seats on the PA symbol. The sympathy vote generated by Muslim Congress leader Ashraff's demise triggered off a massive PA swing. The UNP got two Sinhala MPs in while an EPDP candidate won on an Independent list where Tamil organizations had come together on a combined list to prevent fragmentation of votes and ensure Tamil representation. In Trincomalee Tamils lost representation for the first time in the Island's history of representative democracy. From M M Subramaniam in the Legislative council in 1924 to R. Sambandan in the dissolved Parliament there has been a Tamil representative from Trincomalee. Excessive

Division of Tamil votes among contending parties and Independent groups resulted no Tamil being elected this time. The PA got two Muslims and a

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Sinhala while the UNP had a Muslim MP in Trincomalee. Batticaloa saw two TULF and one PA candidate win. Apart from these three Tamils, two Muslims were returned from the UNP and NUA respectively. A Tamil candidate from the PA won for the first time while the TULF suffered a decline. The TULF that got 75000 votes last time dropped to 54000 with its star candidate Joseph Pararajasingham's preferences decreasing from 43000 to 12000.

A notable feature of the predominantly Tamil and Muslim North and East is the success of Sinhala dominated parties as opposed to the lack lustre performance of the TULF and other Tamil parties. There are 31 seats from the N-E of which 15 are from the North and 16 from the East. The breakdown is: PA - 9, UNP - 6, TULF - 5, EPDP - 5 (4+1), TELO - 3, NUA - 2 and ACTC - 1. The ethnic composition of MPs is 12 Tamil, 2 Sinhala, and one Muslim from the North, and 8 Muslim, 4 Tamil and 4 Sinhala MP's from the East.

One reason for the drop in Tamil MP's was the outward migration of Tamils due to the war and the inflow of Sinhala settlers sponsored by the state over the past years. A visible pattern in the election was that the plethora of Tamil parties and Independent Groups were fragmenting the limited number of Tamil votes by excessive competition among themselves. Also the Tamil lists were exclusively Tamil in heterogeneous electorates like Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Amparai and the Wannai while the major parties fielded multi-ethnic lists comprising Muslims, Tamils and Sinhala candidates.

The Plantation Tamils who had eight elected and two national list MP's in the last Parliament won only five elected MP's this time. In 1994 the Ceylon Workers Congress contesting under the UNP symbol won three in Nuwara Eliya, two in Colombo and one each in Kandy and Ratnapura. Another two were appointed on the national list. The Up Country Peoples Front had one in Nuwara Eliya. This time, the CWC split in two with the faction led by Arumugam Thondaman going along with the PA. It contested on the PA symbol in some districts and separately in others. The other group led by former minister Devarajan contested on the UNP ticket. Also Periyasamy Chandrasekaran leader of the UCPF, Mano Ganeshan of the Democratic Workers Congress and M S Sellasamy of the Natio-

nal Workers Congress also were with the UNP. Arumugam Thondaman, Muttu Sivalingam and Shanmugam Krishnan Jegatheesan were elected in Nuwara Eliya on the PA ticket. The CWC failed elsewhere. Likewise only Chandrasekaran and Subbiah Sathasivam won from the UNP in Nuwara Eliya. Mano Ganeshan failed to win a seat by 96 votes in Colombo. The UNP however has appointed three other Up Country Tamils, M S Sellasamy, P P Devaraj and K. Kanagaraj as national list MP's. The PA appointed K. Marimuthu from the CWC on the national list. It also re-appointed foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar a Sri Lankan Tamil as a national list MP.

The spectre of violence and electoral fraudulence has cast a deep shadow over the polls this year. The most serious type in the South was in the Kandy district where the PA's "War" minister and President Kumaratunga's uncle Anuruddha Ratwatte's supporters are accused of waging a violent, intimidatory and corrupt election campaign. The votes in at least 20 polling stations were nullified by the Election Commissioner. Though Ratwatte obtained the highest number of PA preferences for the district, 152,511, his image has been tarnished considerably because of the alleged tough tactics of his sons, Lohan and Chanuka. Lohan was arrested and produced in courts for alleged offences including attacks on the district's Police Deputy Inspector General Herath's office and for firing on Muslim Congress supporters killing two and injuring fifty four. Another bigwig personality against whom allegations have been made is PA strongman from Nuwara Eliya Sports Minister S B Dissanayake.

The preliminary reports submitted by election monitoring bodies such as the PAFFEREL and MFFE have noted that elections were relatively free and fair in 12 of the 20 electoral districts monitored by them including three Eastern districts. Of the other eight districts consisting of Kandy, Anuradhapura, Puttalam, Matale, Gampaha, Kegalle, Kurunegala and Nuwara Eliya, the PAFFEREL - MFFE reports observed "A high level of violence, intimidation, and ballot stuffing leading in some instances to an interruption of the poll itself was reported in these districts". Another monitoring body the CMEV stated that voting in 578 booths was flawed and that around 700,000 votes

were cast in these booths. As such the CMEV claimed that this would have had a major impact on the outcome of the polls. The opinion of the local monitoring bodies contrasted sharply with those of the foreign observer teams that tended to deliver a generalised clean chit to the overall exercise.

If this was the situation in these districts, the scenario in the Tamil dominated Jaffna and Wannai districts was not very different. In fact no organization attempted to monitor elections there. The situation was there was prejudged with Lord Naseby of the UK commenting that it was not possible to have a "full and fair election because of the terrorist activity of the LTTE and the possible unreliability of the voter registers."

Election day itself saw heavy artillery fights raging between the LTTE and Government troops in several areas of the Jaffna peninsula.

A structural defect in the elections in the north was the disparity between actual voter numbers and figures in the voter registers. This was due to massive displacement and migration of Tamils. Moreover a substantial number of Tamils were living in LTTE-controlled areas and were unable to vote. Other regions like Welioya were totally depopulated of Tamils. The TULF complained about this saying that "it participated in the contest in an undemocratic environment". The TULF also alleged that in Jaffna "one political party was able to behave as if it was the government. It was able to dispense favours even while the election was on." In a severe indictment of the results in the North - East, TULF Secretary General R. Sambandan observed "we do not look upon the election results as reflecting a genuinely democratic verdict of the people in the north. I would say it is an aberration of existing ground reality."

There is no denying that the Sri Lankan elections was NOT conducted perfectly and peacefully. While the difficulties of conducting an ideal poll in a war situation have to be appreciated, premeditated violence, election malpractices and the abuse and misuse of power by those in authority cannot be condoned. In fact such fraudulence and violence has to be penalised wherever possible. Nevertheless what is positive in the entire scenario is the overwhelming desire of the Sri Lankan electorate

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People & Politics

Silence of Disillusion

Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhitha Thera has been the most articulate Sinhala-Buddhist ideologue in recent years. He is a powerful orator in Sinhala drawing upon to full advantage all the resources from his religious background and learning. In a way, he can be compared to Rev. Ian Paisley (from Northern Ireland) of Sri Lankan politics.

For a man who has donned yellow robes professing to preach the kindly message of tolerance, non-violence, compassion and peace of the Buddha, when Ven. Sobitha speaks in public to large audiences, the sheer violence and intolerance of his message in demagoguery is matched only by the image he presents of the ugly face of religious bigotry. Choosing to become the Defender of the Faith and the Sinhala Nation, Ven. Sobitha occupies many elevated positions: President of the Moubima Surakeema Viyaparaya (Movement for the Defence of the Motherland), President of the Sinhala Veeravidahana, President of the Jathika Sanga Sabhawa etc. leaving one to wonder whether he has any time left to practise his chosen religious vocation.

Incidentally this monk, who has eschewed greed (thannava) and given up all worldly and material pleasures in the noble pursuit of attaining nibbana, has filed a case against Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd. (ANCL) for defamation. In this case Ven. Sobhitha Thera is claiming that a certain article published in the Silumina newspaper was defamatory of him and Veeravidahana Organization where he held the position of the President. He says that the said article had lowered his image and therefore he claims Rs. 200 million as compensation. The trial in this case has been fixed for 21 No-

vember.

Ven. Sobitha does not recognise that there is an ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, nor does he agree that the minority communities should complain of any grievances as they have none. According to him, it is the majority Sinhala-Buddhists who have been betrayed by the grave injustices committed against them. He sees the problem facing Sri Lanka as one merely of "terrorism" by the Tamil Tigers who should be crushed militarily.

In recent months, he has been in the forefront of the campaign against the government's new Constitutional Bill on the ground that it gave too much to the minority communities and betrayed the Sinhala-Buddhists. During the recent election campaign, he worked hard for the defeat of the governing party for fear that, if it regained power, it would attempt to enact a new Constitution, and associated himself with the campaign of the ultra-nationalist outfit known as the "Sihala Urumaya". What was paradoxical was that he also supported the opposition UNP which advocated peace talks with the Tamil Tigers. The Sinhala-Buddhist voters of the country, who constitute the overwhelming majority did not want to touch the Sihala Urumaya even with a barge pole, and its candidates were severely beaten. His second best hope, the UNP failed in its bid for regaining political power.

Following the elections, Ven. Sobitha appears to be a very disillusioned man. The following is an interesting and relevant comment by a columnist in the Sunday Observer:

"The Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhitha is clearly a very disillusioned person. In a recent statement the Thera has said it was today a matter of ridicule to talk of race and country. There was no purpose in talking of these. No purpose whatever was served. He was thinking of not talking of any such things in the future, but to step aside and remain silent.

One can well understand the reason for the disillusionment of the Ven. Sobhitha Thera, after appearing on TNL the day before the polls and exhorting the people not to vote for the PA. The result of the election must have shown him what impact his words, and

so many others wearing his garb, had on the people. This is even buttressed by the farcical performance of the Sihala Urumaya, and its subsequent infighting over a single seat.

The problem that Ven. Sobhitha Thera faces in not in preaching to the people about race and country or "rata and jathiya". Rather it is in calling on the people to refuse to accept the rights of the minorities and keep them under subjugation, and ensure the permanent dominance of the majority Sinhalese. How this could be the teaching of any person who took to robes after one's initial disillusionment with secular society, and accepted the teaching of the Buddha that there should be compassion towards all beings, is a puzzle to many but to the racists who have made Buddhism their cover.

There is no harm in the Rev. Maduluwawe Sobhitha Thera making a brief retreat into silence so as to contemplate the real situation and gather his thoughts. No one wishes that he will remain silent on all matters. One would be glad to see the day when he resumes from where he stopped about 15 years ago, and preaches the true message of the Buddha to the people, with all it has to say of tolerance, compassion and loving kindness."

Change of Stance of Tamil Parties

Following the 1994 general election, all the non-LTTE Tamil parties which had parliamentary representation lent their support to the PA government under Chandrika Kumaratunga. What is significantly different now, following the recent election, is that except for the EPDP, all other Tamil parties have refused to support the PA in forming the government. In fact they appear to be more hostile to the PA than towards the UNP. Reading their recent statements, it would seem that these parties would have happily supported the UNP had it secured more seats to be able to form a government.

Only the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP), which secured 4 seats in Jaffna and one in the East, has joined the the government in a coalition, its leader Douglas becoming the Minister of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Northeast.

Of special political significance is the post-election position of the TULF. Until recently, though not being part of the ruling coalition, it had been supportive of and worked closely with the President and the PA government, par-

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to uphold and maintain democracy in the face of tremendous odds. John Cushahan of the European Elections Observations team summed up this aptly: "The overall result reasonably reflected the political intentions of the Sri Lankan people who demonstrated their own commitment to the democratic process by turning out in such high numbers,"

ticularly in connection with the draft constitutional reform and devolution proposals of which one of the architects was the late Dr M Tiruchelvam until his assassination in July 1999. For its collaboration with the government, the TULF paid a heavy price by many of its leading members, including Member of Parliament Thambithurai, two Mayors of Jaffna, Mrs S Yogeswaran and Mr. Sivapalan, becoming victims of assassination.

The stance of the TULF, which won 5 seats (3 in Jaffna and 2 in Batticaloa) in the recently held election, would appear to have undergone a radical transformation. Its Vice President, V Anandasangari, in a statement made after the election said that there was no question of the TULF's support for the government. "We will not touch the PA even with a barge poll. We know well about Mr Ranil Wickremasinghe also. If the UNP gives us a guarantee that it would hold immediate talks with third party mediation, we will give our definite support from outside for them to form the government. All what we need is change in the governance since the Tamil people have suffered enough under the PA government," Mr Anandasangari said.

The All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC), which won one seat in Jaffna, was more categorical in its opposition to the PA. Its General Secretary, N Kumaraguruparan said that his party would support the UNP if it accepted the LTTE as the sole representative of the Tamil people and held immediate talks with the LTTE.

The Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO), which secured three seats, also declared its support to the UNP to form a government. Its leader and newly elected MP Mr Selvam Adaikalanathan said that the TELO had been against the PA government from the very beginning. "All what we need is change of rule and we will support the UNP wholeheartedly if it promises to talk to the LTTE immediately with a cease-fire to find a political solution which would meet the aspirations of the Tamil nation. Economic embargo on Wanni should be lifted and the pass system in Vavuniya should be abolished. All these conditions should be implemented within six months. We hope that Mr Ranil Wickremasinghe will give this country a good leadership," he said.

Though the LTTE did not participate in the elections, the fact that it tar-

geted one PA election rally in Madawachiya, and one SLMC rally in the east with suicide attacks, but did not attack or call upon or prevent the Tamil people from voting for the TULF, ACTC or the TELO is also seen by political observers as a reflecting a realignment of political forces within the Tamil fold.

First Muslim Female MP

Though the recently elected Parliament will have few women Members of Parliament, it is significant that the first Muslim woman to sit in Sri Lanka's parliament is Abdul Rahaman Ajan Umma, surprisingly representing the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP).

Ajan Umma has been involved in JVP politics since the 1970s. It was her brother who involved her in the politics of the JVP when it was being led by the late Rohana Wijeweera who was killed after being captured by the security forces reportedly on the orders of the then Minister of Defence Ranjan Wijeratne.

"This is representation for the women of Sri Lanka. On the other hand this is also a representation of the Sinhalese, Muslims and Tamils in this country," Ajan Umma says reflecting the JVP's political position which attributes the present ethnic conflict as one produced by "capitalism". The JVP is opposed not only to separatism, but also devolution of powers to the regions as manifested in its virulent campaign against the government's aborted new Constitutional Bill.

Married and a mother of three, the 45-year-old parliamentarian who walked into Parliament on the opening day covering her head in the traditional Muslim manner, says that her husband has always been supportive of her political activities. "We have a very good understanding. He understands me very well and also knows a lot about politics," Ajan Umma says presumably indicating a perception that her husband still has a role in determining her political life.

Ajan Umma echoes the position of the JVP when she says that nothing much can be achieved under the present government or one under the UNP adding, "We have a lot of plans but all can be implemented only if we come to power." But as a woman MP she says, "I will support any motion that safeguards women's rights."

In a statement showing absolute loyalty to the party, Ajan Umma says, "I don't seek anything from politics. I

don't need anything more than what the party gives me. I am satisfied with that, I don't need anything more."

One should be happy that another woman, more so a woman from the Muslim community which has been very puritanical as far as rights of women are concerned holding back them from playing a role in public affairs, has become an MP because of the derisory nature of women representation in Parliament. However, Umma Ajan comes from a party that had its origins in Stalinism and Maoism and later embracing Pol Pottism. It has been a party that resorted to acts of unbridled terrorism of the most barbaric and cruel kind during the 1988-1989 period. While posturing to following Marxist concepts, the JVP has resorted to tactics of flirting with Sinhala-Buddhist patriotism that was self evident during its recent electoral campaign. In this background, whether Ajan Umma will have freedom to articulate progressive ideas in regard to rights of people as citizens and specially in respect of the rights of women in her own right as a woman MP is a doubtful proposition.

Veerappan Fuels Nedumaran Controversy

The recent foray into the forests to rescue Dr. Rajkumar from the notorious sought after fugitive from justice, Veerappan, saw the emergence of a second force among negotiators - P. Nedumaran, leader of the Tamil Nationalist Movement, breaking Nakkeeran Editor Gopal's monopoly, states a recent report in The Hindustan Times by G C Shekar.

However, the report adds that Nedumaran's involvement has triggered off a controversy as his pro-LTTE baggage has become a convenient stick for Karunanidhi's critics to beat with.

Even as the Supreme Court and other alarmists envisaged an LTTE-Veerappan nexus being facilitated by Nedumaran, Karnataka Chief Minister S.M. Krishna sought to distance himself from the new emissary, saying that he was Karunanidhi's choice. On 19 October, Karunanidhi disclosed that Krishna had cleared Nedumaran's choice and had even spoken to him over phone before he left.

Veerappan's choice of Nedumaran as emissary was a surprise since this former Congressman-turned-Tamil radical had not taken any position on the Rajkumar episode. Probably on the

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King Makers of Sri Lanka

By T. Sabaratnam

The late leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, Ashraff was an admirer of Thondaman. He wanted to emulate him. In 1989, he told me: See how Thondaman is serving his people and the country. Why don't our Muslim leaders realize this? By being part of mainstream parties they have betrayed our people?"

That was the time he was negotiating with Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike about joining the People's Alliance (PA) which was formed to fight the Presidential election. Later he joined the UNP presidential candidate R. Premadasa who offered him favourable terms.

During that conversation Ashraff pointed out the pathetic plight of the Muslim leaders in both the national parties, UNP and SLFP, who failed to condemn the police shooting inside the Puttalam Mosque. He said he did not blame them but only pitied them. They could not lift their fingers for fear of hurting the interests of their parties. It was left to Federal Party leader S. J. V. Chelvanayakam to raise the matter in parliament. Ashraff composed a poem in Tamil to express his gratitude to S. J. V for that act.

Savumiamoorthy Thondaman, leader of the powerful upcountry trade union, Ceylon Workers Congress, held the in-

terests of his community his main concern. In 1978, when President J. R. Jayewardene invited him to join his cabinet, Thondaman laid down one condition: he would not be bound by the principle of cabinet responsibility in matters that concern the Indian Tamils. On all other matters he would toe the government line. A notable example was the 1984 plantation strike. The government declined to pass on to the plantation workers the salary raise it granted to industrial workers. After all efforts at persuasion failed Thondaman led a strike against the government and earned for himself the credit of being the only cabinet minister to lead a strike against the government.

In matters affecting the Tamils he took an independent stand. The best example was his defence of Opposition Leader A. Amirthalingam in 1981 against whom President Jayewardene's UNP brought a no-confidence motion. On ethnic question he took a sturdy independent line.

M. H. M. Ashraff who entered politics as a TULF supporter assessed correctly the source of Thondaman's strength: his ability to command the support of his people. He had a considerable vote bank at his disposal and it was that power he used to make governments.

as a staunch advocate of the LTTE. Even after the group's hand in Rajiv Gandhi's assassination was proved in court, Nedumaran refused to distance himself from the Tigers.

"The Tigers remain the sole and real representative of Sri Lankan Tamils and they're giving their lives for the Tamils. Other things do not matter," is how he would justify his support to the LTTE.

Under these circumstances his involvement in the Rajkumar episode raised allegations that he was signing up Veerappan and other extremists with him into the pro-LTTE bandwagon.

Refusing to answer that criticism Nedumaran's only reply was, "My mission was impelled only by humanitarian considerations. My political affiliations at this juncture are irrelevant when the most important thing is to get Dr. Rajkumar released."

Thondaman was supreme as long as he stood as a separate entity. Since 1990 parliamentary election when he contested as part of the UNP he released the very force he was countering earlier. He opened the gates for his people to be slowly sucked into the national parties. In 1994 parliamentary election a considerable section of his people voted with the UNP. The UNP engineer-red splits in his once monolithic organization. M. S. Sellasamy's defection and the defection of six Central Province Council members were engineered by the UNP to weaken him.

The process of being drawn into the national mainstream strengthened in October 2000 parliamentary election. The CWC contested on its own in Colombo, Kandy, Badulla and Vanni and contested with the PA in other areas. The CWC won three seats under PA in Nuwara Eliya and lost in all other districts. Thondaman's grandson, Arumu-gam, the current leader, former MP Mu-thhu Sivalingam and K. Jegathees-waran, were the successful candidates. PA had nominated one of the CWC member, K. Marimuthu in its national list. With these four men in parliament as part of the PA, the CWC had lost its king maker role.

That does not mean Indian Tamils have lost their representation in parliament. They have another 5 on the UNP side. Upcountry People's Front leader P. Chandrasekaran, the man who hel- ped in 1994 Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaramtungu to form the government and who defected to the UNP a year ago is back in parliament with the UNP from the Nuwara Eliya district. So is S. Sathasivam, one of the vice-presidents who defected from the CWC to the UNP after the dissolution of parliament. The UNP had nominated M. S. Sellasamy, P. P. Devaraj and Kanap-athy Kanagarajah in its national list. Thus, there are 5 Indian Tamil MPs with the UNP.

In the last parliament there were 7 from the CWC and Chandrasekaran. Two more entered when Gamini Dissa-nayake and Ossie Abeygunawardene were assassinated. In this parliament 9 had entered and another may get in through death or resignation because Indian Tamil candidates like Mano Ga-neshan missed entering parliament by 96 votes.

In 1994 August election though CWC contested on the UNP list Thondaman's influence made the Indian Tamil voters to vote for the CWC men. This time with the revolt by the vice-presidents who joined the UNP Indian Tamil votes were split. Badulla and Colombo are good ex-

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advice given by the TNLA extremists, Veerappan chose Nedumaran hoping that his Tamil nationalistic credentials would carry greater clout with the two governments.

The two state governments had similar hopes about Nedumaran being able to convince Veerappan into releasing Rajkumar. Neither happened.

Nedumaran's transformation from a hardcore Congressman to hardcore Tamil extremist is an unexplained phenomena of Tamil Nadu politics. It was the outbreak of ethnic riots in Sri Lanka in 1983 that saw him getting fully involved in the Sri Lankan Tamils issue.

A vehement critic of the IPKF operations, he travelled to the Vanni jungles in North Sri Lanka to meet Prabhakaran at the height of IPKF operations there. Since then he has been viewed

amples of how Indian elected representation was lost because of the split and the subsequent joining with the national parties. In Badulla UNP won 5 seats and PA 3 seats, none of them were Indian Tamils. But P. V. Sennan, a former CWC vice president who defected and contested with the UNP, polled 28,049 votes and Aravind Kumar who also contested on the UNP list on behalf of the Up Country People's Front polled 18,738 votes. Thus UNP collected over 50,000 Indian Tamil votes. S. Satchiyananthan who contested in the CWC list polled 91110.

A similar situation was evident in Colombo. DWC candidate who contested under the UNP list polled 37,798 votes but failed to get elected. Those votes helped the UNP to swell its total votes. UNP and the PA have acknowledged the fact that they benefited from the Indian Tamil votes and have compensated them by allocating seats for the Indian Tamils. That only increased the dependence of the Indian Tamils on the mercies of the national parties.

Thus the CWC and the Indian Tamils have lost their clout. They are now in the two major national parties and their voice will naturally be not heard loud and clear. What Thondaman wanted to avert had happened. And it was he who started the process.

Ashraff wanted to emulate Thondaman and he had done it. Muslims voted united and have given the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress 11 MPs. Though he is no more these 11 MPs have decided the government. Three weeks before the election Ashraff told the media that he would be the king maker this time. He was correct.

He has made the same mistake Thondaman had made. His party contested in Ampara and Trincomalee in the PA list and won 5 seats. In 10 districts including Colombo his party contested under the name National Unity Alliance and won four seats. On the PA national list it collected two seats making a total of 11 seats. This procedure of contesting on two fronts had sown the seeds of disintegration of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress. Muslims will soon move back to the national parties from which Ashraff weaned them away.

The drift to the national parties is easier for the Muslims because more Muslims MPs are in the national parties than in the SLMC. In this parliament there are 23 Muslim MPs and only 11 of them are in the SLMC. Of the balance 12 Muslim MPs 9 are from UNP, 2 from PA and one from the JVP.

Break-up of the Sinhala Urumaya

Dr. S.Narapalasingam

The Sinhala Urumaya (SU) - meaning Sinhalese Heritage - was founded about three months ago. It happened at a time when there was the prospect of a bipartisan consensus emerging between the governing Peoples Alliance and the opposition United National Party on enacting a new Constitution which also provided for devolution of powers to regional councils. Ganging up with diehard chauvinist elements, the SU was in the forefront of the campaign against the Constitutional Bill that was to be presented to Parliament. It claimed to promote and sustain the supreme rights of the majority Sinhalese and to ensure that governments give preference to their interests and aspirations over those of all other minority ethnic groups. Posturing as the champions of the Sinhalese, the party also promised to restore the rights of the Sinhalese lost under the UNP and the PA led by opportunistic Sinhalese political leaders succumbing to minority demands. They accused the two main political parties that have ruled since independence for granting rights to the minorities to which they are not entitled to the detriment of the Sinhalese.

Among the Sri Lankan Tamils too the shift towards the national parties is evident. Jaffna voters elected a UNP MP this time after nearly four decades. Four EPDP MPs will be with the PA. Thus five of its 9 Jaffna MPs are with the national parties. Amparal's Tamil MP Gunasekaram Sankar of the EPDP too will be with the national parties. In Trincomalee a substantial number of Tamils voted with the UNP swelling the UNP representation to two Muslim and one Sinhala MPs. Batticaloa elected S. Ganeshamoorthy from the PA thus causing the TULF representation to be reduced to 2.

TULF with 5 MPs, TELO with 3 and Tamil Congress with one are the three Sri Lankan Tamil groups that could voice the interests of the Tamil people. But they have no king maker role.

The drift into national politics is reducing the importance of the national minorities and if the current trend continues their role would be reduced to that of influencing the national parties. ●

The time has come to protect the territorial rights of the Sinhala people and the territorial integrity of their country - Sri Lanka, they shouted. It is, therefore, vital that the unitary political system that guaranteed majority rule is maintained without allowing it to be diluted in any way by the enactment of the new Constitution, they argued. The Tamil people have no grievances, there is no ethnic problem, the only problem is one of terrorism that should be crushed militarily, they proclaimed.

The hawkish stand of the SU's was not surprising for its prominent leaders and members came from the National Movement Against Terrorism and Sinhala Veera Vidhana and some bigoted elements from the Buddhist clergy. That the leading Colombo lawyer S.L. Gunasekara (SL), who had been advocating ardently for many years through newspaper articles and speeches in various forms the ideology of strident Sinhala nationalism, should become SU's founder President did not surprise anyone. He contested the October 10 parliamentary election in the same capacity.

The Sinhala Urumaya party was routed everywhere in the country, more severely in the Sinhalese heartland. Everyone of its leaders, including its President SL, was badly beaten. Contesting throughout the country the SU managed to get only a derisory 1.5 percent of the votes. It did not win even a single seat in Parliament. However, on the basis of the share of the total votes it obtained countrywide, SU was allotted one out of the 29 seats on the national list. SL having failed to win by popular vote despite the system of proportional representation, (he was a SU candidate in the Colombo district) was chosen by his party to take the allotted seat.

There is some controversy about the manner in which the appointment was made on October 12, while a Central Committee meeting convened to prepare and issue a statement following the party's defeat in the elections was in progress. Suffice to note that Champika Ranawaka of the National Movement Against Terrorism (he was earlier a JVP activist), who functioned as Convenor of the SU,

favoured by some SU members is reported to have withdrawn his candidature after one member stated that it was not desirable to take a vote on this matter of appointment. Then, SL "was unanimously selected as the nominee for the National List seat."

What followed next is interesting. According to SL, less than an hour after the conclusion of that meeting a large crowd of supporters of Champika Ranawaka, among whom Ranawaka too was present, invaded the private office of Tilak Karunaratne, the SU General Secretary and sought to pressurise him into changing that decision. Shortly thereafter a section of that crowd invaded the house of Prof. A.D.V. de S. Indraratne, a Vice President of SU and manhandled him. His sin was that he had proposed SL as the nominee for the national list seat. Both he and SL later accused this faction from the National Movement Against Terrorism of resorting to sheer terrorism to achieve their aim! What a quick turnaround? The anti-terrorists have become terrorists for the sake of seat in Parliament!

SL is said to be a committed atheist, though he is considered a Christian by some as he has been baptised to be an Anglican. When he was advocating his ultra-nationalist doctrines of majoritarian rule, he must have overlooked the fact that the majority of Sinhalese are Buddhists. How this came to disable him on October 16, less than a week after he was nominated to represent the SU in the newly elected Parliament is described below. It should serve as a warning to those who might have got carried away by SU's doctrine of majoritarian rule because of its emotional appeal. The system is simply unholy, undemocratic and unprogressive and has the potential to undermine unity, peace, stability and the very cultural values that are essential for political, social and economic advancement of any modern society.

Following the dissatisfaction of some key members over the selection of non-Buddhist SL and the pressures brought to bear on the party's General Secretary, an urgent meeting of the Central Committee was summoned on October 16 to review the earlier decision. According to SL, at this meeting he was attacked in vituperative language by some commit-

tee members including Champika Ranawaka who as noted earlier was formerly a leading JVP activist lately to become a leader of the National Movement Against Terrorism. The methods used to deprive SL of the appointment, included thuggery, pressure and intrigue. Among the allegations made against him were that he was an agnostic and had refused to offer a tray of flowers to the "Sacred Tooth Relic in April this year." Another charge being he speaks often in English and prepares statements in English.

Tilak Karunaratne, the general secretary of SU who resigned from the UNP earlier this year and who has been nominated as SU's National List MP in place of SL said, "A leader with such a background is not welcomed at grassroots level since it is alien to our culture. People could take him as an alien." Regretting the resignation of SL and seven other members, he said: "Mr. Gunasekara and others resigned arguing that the first opportunity should be given to him. But Mr. Ranawaka and the Sangha were against it." He added, "It's a big blow. But they are individuals. We have to listen to the majority."

SL himself has stated that the very facts cited to disqualify him were known to his rivals in the party even at the time they appointed him as the president of SU. It is also clear that SL has been cunningly used for electoral advantage to portray the SU as a party fighting for the rights of all Sinhalese. Even this tactic failed to attract many Sinhala votes, as the people seemed to have realised the inherent danger to the country and their future that exists in SU's policies.

Addressing the media at the party office on October 17, Karunaratne said "it was a struggle between the English speaking elite and the Sinhala educated radical youth of the party." This is how the majority-minority divide trapped the former president of the SU who with great zeal promoted Sinhala majority rule in multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural Sri Lanka. SL is now regarded as a member of the minority English speaking elite and an outsider to the Sinhala Buddhist ethos, and even an alien. In short, in the opinion of the Sinhala Buddhist ultranationalists in the party, SL does not have the lineage to wear the badge of "Sinhalese Heritage". If this

does not appear as discrimination to attorney S.L. Gunasekara, then all that have happened since independence to the minorities under "majority rule" will not appear discriminatory. At least, he must realise what it is like to be a member of a minority group under majority domination and importantly when the majority-minority divide is based solely on the person's religious belief and the language he speaks fluently and writes well. At least now SL must admit that the Tamils have problems because of discrimination, now that he knows how problems crop up when people are treated differently based on their ethnic or religious or class identities.

The difference between SL's bitter experience and of the powerless minority Tamils is that unlike the latter discrimination has left him only an unpleasant feeling without condemning him to lead a life that is subservient and insecure. What the Tamils and Muslims knew and accepted as fact several years ago that none from their communities could ever aspire to be the Prime Minister or the President of Sri Lanka because of being non-Buddhist, SL might have just realised only after his recent experience. SL must rethink his stand towards the minorities; all they want is their political, economic, social and cultural rights and the freedom to exercise these under a democratic system in the same way as the majority Sinhalese. They have absolutely no intention to be at the helm shaping the future of the Sinhalese. Surely, it is not difficult to come up with a political system that is democratic and fair by the minorities and which does not pose any threat to the rights, interests and aspirations of the majority Sinhalese. SL himself can make valuable contribution here, if only he has the capacity to understand the import of his own recent experience.

It has been reported while explaining the consequences of events that led to his resignation from the post of president of the Sinhala Urumaya and the party. SL broke down and held back his tears with great difficulty. Many Sri Lankans including the majority Sinhalese will find it difficult to sympathise with his views on majority and minority rights, but those who have suffered as a result of various discriminatory policies and practices will surely understand his present feelings. ●



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Dear Periya Annah,

I know you would be waiting anxiously for this letter. You would like to know the detailed results of the Jaffna election and some

spicy material which you can relish relating to your friends, especially those from the islands.

First the results. The EPDP won 4 seats, TULF 3, UNP 1 and All Ceylon Tamil Congress 1. There are 9 seats for Jaffna and Kilinochchi districts which together form the Jaffna electoral district. In 1994 there were 10 seats, the decline to 9 was due to the emigration of the people from Jaffna and Kilinochchi.

Mother was happy that the Tamil Congress had come back to the scene and started bragging of G. G. Ponnambalam and his verbal oratorical skill. My uncle and his friends are unhappy that the TULF came a poor second. They wanted it to be the leading political force in Jaffna. My sister and others of our generation are unaware of GG and SJV and of even Anandasangari and Mavai Senathirajah. "Who is this fellow Mavai?" she asked after reading his name in a TULF poster. It is not her fault. These people had distanced themselves from the younger generation. They had made themselves forgotten. Seventeen years have passed since they fled Jaffna. The younger generation knows only the various 'movements' and their infighting. They were all in Jaffna for the election but only EPDP's Douglas Devananda made the impact.

PLOTE leader Dharmalingam Sidharthan, EPRLF leaders Suresh Premachandran and Annamalai Varatharaja Perumal and TELO leaders Sri Kantha were there offering themselves to serve the people of Jaffna. They naturally kissed the dust. It's their seeking. All of them had pockets of support but never cared to organize a wider base or prepare for the election as Devananda did. To win at an election you need not only supporters but also the mastery of filling the ballot boxes with votes. Devananda mastered that art and naturally he won the highest number of votes.

PLOTE had in Manikkathan the rival to Devananda but his killing a year ago had left Devananda without rival. PLOTE's capacity to win an election waned after Manikkathan's death. Sidharthan is too gentle to win an election and he can only send faxes to the Elections Commissioner complaining the misdeeds of others.

EPRLF enjoyed pockets of influence

Letter from Jaffna

but their split had splintered the support base. Varatharaja Perumal's vision of entering parliament, as an elected representative of the people could not be translated into reality with a few propaganda vans singing glory of his valiant deeds a decade ago. The people still remembered his disastrous attempt to build a Tamil National Army. He himself rekindles their aversion to him by talking about building an armed group to assist the government to fight the LTTE. TELO had some support in KKS but that is not properly organized.

The UNP won a seat, strangely from Kilinochchi, after three decades and some elders say they were reminded of the UNP election campaigns in Jaffna of yesteryear: of arrack bottles, sarees, verties and cash. You cannot accuse the UNP only of these misdeeds. Lorry loads of these "goods" were delivered at refugee camps in various parts of the Jaffna peninsula.

The turnout at the election was not that spectacular. Total polled was only 132,733 out of the total registered voters, 622,331. The percentage of votes polled was 21.33. Of the votes polled 13,664 were rejected leaving the valid votes of 119,069. Of these EPDP collected 41,671 votes and obtained 4 seats. TULF gathered 32,852 votes and got 3 seats. UNP came third with 11,431, Tamil Congress fourth with 10,648 obtaining one seat each. EPDP polled the highest in Kayts, Devananda's kingdom, where 12,311 votes were cast in its favour. It secured 4869 votes in Vaddukoddai, 4068 in KKS, 5737 in Manipai, 5044 in Kopay, 1,662 in Udupidy, 1862 in Point Pedro, 1256 in Chavakachcheri, 2,560 in Nallur, 1571 in Jaffna and 216 at Kilinochchi. TULF's best performance was at Manipai where it obtained 5703. It did well in Vaddukoddai (4035), KKS (4943), Kopay (4248) and Udupidy (4180). In Jaffna electorate polling was sloth due to the artillery duel between the LTTE and the army. The LTTE started it with a shell fired close to Jaffna kachcheri which prompted the election officials to shift to the ground floor. Shells also exploded in Pannai, Gurunagar and Chundikuli prompting the people to shift to safer places.

Soon after the election was concluded special messengers flew into Jaffna to canvas the support of Devananda. On

Thursday he was airlifted to Colombo for a meeting with President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga. They met in the night at Temple Trees where Devananda

pledged his support. The reward some say will be a cabinet portfolio and an interim administration for the North-Eastern Region.

Election campaign was full of spicy incidents. I will relate only a few.

First, I will tell you the story of Mrs. Jayanthi Paramalingam who contested on the independent group of government supporters. She traveled to Delft West, her birthplace, on October 1 with her father Ampalam, a former chairman of the Delft Village Council. She carried with her two sacks full of election posters and handbills. She was in the bus to Delft West which stopped at the EPDP checkpoint. The men at the checkpoint told her that election materials were not permitted inside their territory. They wanted to burn it.

Jayanthi pulled out a poster with the picture of President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga on it and asked: "Do you want to burn the President's picture?" They answered the query by burning the poster. She screamed at them and went home.

This is the translation of what she told the Jaffna Tamil press next day: I was in my home in the night when someone knocked at the door. I looked out of the window. There were about 20 armed men shouting at me to open the door. I did not. They shouted filth and threatened to break open the door. My father and I ran to the backyard and hid us inside the thicket. In the morning we returned to Jaffna by the first bus," she said.

The TULF and the UNP seemed not to have got the message. The TULF sent a team to do its campaign in Kayts on October 5. They were turned away. The UNP sent a group of 19 persons on October 8 to be its polling agents at the polling stations in the islands. They were all abducted by the EPDP and when police inquired, on a complaint by the UNP, they were told the people were safe and would be released after the election. To PLOTE the experience was slightly different. They just could not find polling agents.

The TULF, PLOTE and the UNP have complained to the Elections Commissioner charging the EPDP of holding the voters of the island captive. PLOTE leader Dharmalingam Siddharthan had de-

(continued on next page)

Convicted Jayalalitha Stands Disqualified

T N Gopalan

In a body blow to her plans to stage a political come-back, former Chief Minister Jayalalitha Jayaram has been convicted to three years of rigorous imprisonment in the notorious TANSI land deal.

Though she has already been sentenced to a one-year RI in the Pleasant Stay Hotels case, this latest should be particularly galling for the AIADMK supremo. For she now stands disqualified from contesting any elections for six years from now. Under Section 8(3) of the Representation of the People Act(RPA), anyone sentenced to two years or more of imprisonment stands so disqualified.

For her bete noire Karunanidhi, beleaguered as he is by various problems, this prospect of her disqualification should come as sweet news, with the Assembly elections slated for early next year.

Also to be sentenced in the scam were her confidante Sasikala, former minister Mohammed Asif, two senior IAS officials R.Karpoorasundara Pandian and T.R.Srinivasan, and an official connected with the registration department S.Nagarajan.

(Continued from page 28)

mandated the cancellation of the polling of the Kayts electorate charging the EPDP of massive fraud.

The rivalry during the campaign was between the TULF and the EPDP. On October 4 a procession wended its way to the TULF office and there it turned unruly. They tried to break into the office but the police guard at the entrance prevented it. Then they broke the name board. Anandasangari, hearing the commotion, came out and was greeted in raw filth. It was only when the police threatened to open fire the demonstrators retreated after burning his effigy,

Please write to us
Your Younger Brother
Anthony

The case related to a deal involving the state-owned Tamil Nadu Small Industries Corporation and two firms with which Jayalalitha and her confidante Sasikala had been associated, Jaya Publications and Sasi Enterprises, way back in 1992 when Jayalalitha was the Chief Minister of the state.

According to the prosecution, the sale of land measuring 3.02 acres with buildings on it, forced down the throat of the TANSI, caused a loss of Rs.4.08 crore to the state exchequer.

The same six accused figure in both the TANSI cases, one relating to the Jaya Publications and another to the Sasi Enterprises. Special Court judge P.Anbazhagan sentenced all the six to a term of three-years RI each in the first case and to a term of two-years RI in the second case. Former minister Asif was, however, acquitted in the Sasi Enterprises case. Since the judge has ruled that the sentences run concurrently, they are deemed to have been sentenced to only a three-year RI each.

The accused were found guilty of colluding to defraud the state and committing criminal breach of trust as also of violating the provisions of Prevention of Corruption Act. A minor favour from Anbazhagan was that he suspended the sentences till November 7 to enable the convicted to appeal to the High Court. So after signing the relevant papers Jayalalitha walked out free on October 9, Sasikala in tow, to return to face the court in the not too distant future in the more sensational Rs.66.66 crore wealth accumulation case.

Jayalalitha's counsels tried every rule in the book to stall the trial in the TANSI cases. Interlocutory petitions galore were filed, numbering nearly one hundred in all, praying for adjournment on every conceivable pretext. Sasikala demanded translation of all the docu-

ments in Tamil Nadu, fought all the way to the Supreme Court and succeeded. When everybody else implicated in the 48 cases in the Special Courts demanded an equal treatment, the government had to employ an army of translators at a total cost of Rs.45 lakhs. And then there was a petition saying that the reservation norms had not been followed in the appointment of the translators. That was dismissed.

Yet again Sasikala said that she was suffering from an eye injury she had sustained some years earlier and so demanded more time to peruse the Tamil documents furnished to her.

And finally when special judge P.Anbazhagan ordered the framing of charges in February last year, on the very day the charges were to be framed. Mohammed Asif managed to obtain a stay from the High Court arguing that Anbazhagan was biased against the accused.

Then the special judge sought to recuse himself from the cases. The drama did not stop there. High Court judge S.S.Subramani who had granted the ex-parte stay went on to make some caustic remarks against Anbazhagan saying that he had called on him and tried to influence him. As the controversy deepened, Justice Subramani was shifted to another bench, and Asif's petition was posted before Justice R.Shanmugam who finally ordered the framing of charges.

In another turn Jayalalitha was "discharged" from the case by the High Court, but the apex court promptly overturned the ruling.

It was that gadfly Subramaniam Swamy who had set the ball rolling, wrenching sanction from the then Governor Chenna Reddy eight years ago.

As nemesis returned to haunt her. Jayalalitha remained predictably grim: right through and later got into her waiting car, ignoring the media crowd. A sidelight was the way she gave a hiding right in the court hall, after the judgement was delivered, to the counsel for one of the IAS officials in the dock. Apparently he had told the Court that his client had only executed the orders of the Chief Minister, turning the knife deeper in her wound. The poor

counsel was squirming, pathetically trying to convince her that he had not done anything of the sort she was charging him with.

But she must have been acutely aware that her characteristic imperiousness could do little to salvage the situation for her. For the first thing she did on reaching her Poes Garden residence was to postpone indefinitely the AIADMK general council meeting scheduled for the next day. It had been called to discuss the party's electoral strategy. She also called off the tour of the southern districts slated for the later part of the month.

After presiding over Periyar EVR's 122nd birth anniversary celebrations in the last week of September, Jayalalitha had scurried off to Thanjavur to perform a series of yagnas to propitiate gods and goddesses. Similar pious deeds seemed to have helped her get an acquittal in the colour TV scam in May last. But this time round the fastidious gods were apparently not too very impressed and chose to allow her to stew in her own juice.

She is certainly at the cross-roads again, because of the disqualification provision. It is still not clear whether the three-year term handed down in the TANSI case does necessarily mean that she stands disqualified from contesting elections, notwithstanding further developments in the case. There are some who seem to feel that if the High Court could stay the operation of a sentence, so also the debarment provision could also be deemed to be placed in suspended animation. If such is the case, all is not lost for Jayalalitha. For as a matter of course, the higher courts put on hold the verdict of the lower courts pending final disposal of the case. But there are others who argue that a "stay" as such is applicable only in a civil case and that only the sentence could be suspended, not the conviction itself.

Whatever the case, the Returning Officer at the ground-level could simply say, stay or no stay, she stands disqualified. After which she has to appeal to the Election Commission itself and then go before the courts if she is still spurned. Whether the courts would like to intervene during the course of

the elections is also a moot point.

Again when such is the extent of uncertainty surrounding her eligibility to contest the elections, how would she project herself as the future Chief Minister and would the people vote for her party with the same enthusiasm as they might show in normal circumstances?

There is no question though that she still remains hugely popular and the anti-Karunanidhi constituency would look up to her for leadership. None can tap that as well as she could. In the circumstances how would she play her cards and save her and her party's political future?

It might be of interest to know it is only the analysts who are racking their heads trying to find answers to such tough questions whereas the Jayalalitha durbar is, or at least was till yesterday, feigning indifference.

Right from the day the Special Courts were constituted and cases initiated under the Prevention of Corruption Act, it was clear to everyone that the Machiavelian Karunanidhi was seeking to have her disqualified from contesting elections, that being his ultimate weapon against the charismatic Jayalalitha, a weapon he would badly need if he wants to ensure a smooth transition to his son Stalin. But at no stage Jayalalitha is known to have touched upon the possibility of disqualification with any of her party leaders or allies.

Tamil Maanila Congress (TMC) leader Moopanar is known to have moved closer to her in recent days only in order to set himself up as an alternative leader for the AIADMK-front in the event of her disqualification, and many have speculated on that. For the records though he was insisting that the TMC was for a coalition government in the future.

Now, whatever her suspicions of his intentions, she desperately needs help from whichever quarter she could rope in. But out of her arrogance or naivete, Jayalalitha insulted Moopanar recently by proclaiming in his presence her party was not for any coalition and that it would form a government by itself. That she sought to mend fences later is a different story altogether.

The point is that she could not stand the thought of sharing power with anyone, leave alone considering anyone else other than her as the future Chief Minister.

Ideally she might stand to gain by opting out of the elections and projecting Moopanar, with a relatively clean image, as the leader of the front. But no such thing seems to be on the cards.

Equally interesting to note that the official organ of the AIADMK, Nama-dhu MGR, carried an announcement that Sasikala has been made a General Council member, the very evening the TANSI judgement was handed down. Finally the decade-long fiction that she is only her personal aide and has no political role or ambitions has been given a quietus.

In fact rumours were afloat for some time that Sasikala was going to play an increasingly prominent role in the party and that she would contest the Assembly elections too. The other notable from the Sasikala clan, T.T.V. Dhinakaran MP, is in some hot waters of sort, it is said. And hence Sasikala was coming centre-stage, it was said.

Well that was all before the TANSI verdict, everyone blissfully indifferent to the possibility of her conviction. But after the verdict and when Sasikala too stands disqualified, Jayalalitha still goes ahead to announce her confidante's "political entry."

The fact remains - neither she nor her trusted friend could conceivably be projected - she is suspicious of others. Even if she brings herself to project a Dhinakaran and party chairman, K.Kalimuthu, a critic-turned-sycophant, there is no guarantee that people would be swayed by them. Moopanar or any other ally, no way. Then what would she do? After all she desperately needs a government which would ensure that all the cases against her go for a six in the higher courts.

If she could have, out of sheer pique, foolishly upset the Vajpayee government when it was already telling the Supreme Court that the Special Courts were unconstitutional, inviting so much problems on her head, she could still be trusted to commit one more gesture of harakiri. ●

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MATRIMONIAL

Jaffna Hindu parents seek partner for daughter, 45, divorcee without encumbrances, in good employment and house owner. Please send horoscope, details. M 1199 c/o Tamil Times.

Brother hailing from an orthodox Jaffna Hindu family, seeks for his pretty, fair, 33 year old doctor sister working in Colombo, a suitable partner. Please reply with personal and family details and horoscope. M 1200 c/o Tamil Times.

Hindu parents seek fair professional partner for their son, 39, well qualified, employed in London. Please send horoscope, details. M 1201 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek British educated partner for son, 30, Global Senior Consultant in leading edge technology (not IT). Send horoscope,

details. M 1202 c/o Tamil Times.

Doctor seeks for doctor brother working in UK (has full registration to work in UK/Australia/NZ), 34 years, Srilankan Hindu, fair, 5'5" height, a professionally qualified bride under 29 years from professionally qualified Srilankan Hindu family living in UK, Australia or NZ. Contact M 1203 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional groom for British educated medical doctor. Send details. M 1204 c/o Tamil Times.

Doctor seeks professional bride for brother, Sri Lankan Hindu Tamil, Indian origin, Chartered Accountant, 37, 5'4" working for International Company in Middle East, migrating to Canada soon. Send photo details. M 1205 c/o Tamil Times.

OBITUARIES



Mrs. Ruby Amirtharane Ratnasingham, Retired teacher, C.M.S. Ladies College, Colombo; daughter of the late Mr. & Mrs. S.K. Rasiyah of Tellippallai, beloved wife of late Mr. S.J. Ratnasingham; loving mother of Kumaran and late Rajan; sister of the late Selvaranee, late Selvarajah, late Kanagarajah and of The-

varanee (London); sister-in-law of Mani (Australia), Ruby (Canada), Inpamani, Rasamalar, Satkunasingham (all of Sri Lanka); late Pearl, Jeyasingham and Jeyarajasingham passed away in Glasgow, Scotland on 21st August 2000 and the funeral took place in Glasgow on 26th August. She will be missed by her close family, relatives and friends.

The members of the family wish to express their sincere thanks to all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy and provided support and assistance in many ways during the period of sorrow and bereavement. They regret their inability to thank them individually. - 51 Fintry Crescent, Bishopbriggs, Glasgow G64 1SH, Scotland. Tel: 0141 772 8597 and 020 8311 9967.

Pathmavathy Selvanayagam



Born: 12 Aug 1916- Died: 24 Sept 2000

Mrs Pathmavathy of 105/12 Rasavim Thottam, Jaffna, Sri Lanka; beloved wife of the late Mr. M.V. Selvanayagam, retired District Court Secretary; loving mother of Baby, Lala, Baba, Jani, Sothy, Pathmana, Luxmi and Thamby; mother-in-law of Soundari, Jeremiah, Jayaratnam and Puvaneswaran; grand mother-in-law of James; grandmother of Selvi, Priya, Vithiyani and Krishna; great grandmother of Jade and Richard (Raj) all of UK, passed away on 24th September 2000 and was cremated at Jaffna at 10 a.m. on 25th September.

The members of her family thank all those who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and assisted during the bereavement.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by Mr. & Mrs. M.P. Chelvanayagam & family, UK, Tel: 01737 765869, UK/ Mr. & Mrs C. Puvaneswaran & family, UK, Tel: 0208 357 0935/ Mr. S. Pathmaratnam; Germany, Tel: 0049 1753715908.



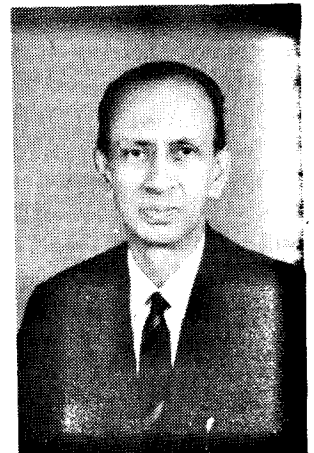
Gunaratnam Kandiah

(1.6.1932 - 13.09.2000)

Mr. Kandiah Gunaratnam, son of the late Parupathipillai and Kandiah; son-in-law of the

late Parupathipillai and Murugesu; beloved husband of Parameswary; loving father of the late Ramani, Niranjin (London) and Nehru (Canada); father-in-law of Dr. Navaneetharaja (London) and Vasanthi (Canada); precious Grandpa of Nishanth and Navena; brother-in-law of the late Ganeshalingam (Engineer), Shanmugalingam (District Judge Jaffna), Yogalingam (J.F. Kilinochchi) and of Vigneswar, Kanagasingam passed away, in London on 13th September 2000 and was cremated on 6th September.

The members of the family wish to thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and floral tributes and assisted them in several ways during the period of bereavement. - 24 Poulett Road, East Ham, London E6 6EG. Tel: 0208 548 4160. (Appreciation on page 33)



Mr. R. Paramaguru, Retired Judge, born 7.5 1916 of Pulo, West, Point Pedro, beloved husband of Annaluxmy; son of the late Manonmani and Velupillai Ramaswamy, Crown Proctor; father of Leelamar Satyabhama, Radhakrishna Dr. Yasodhara, Anusiyadev, father-in-law of the late Param the late Dr. Sivanesan, Sylvia Dr. Sathanathan, and Dr. Dharmarajah passed away on 8.9.2000. His sisters Seethvipillai, Meenambal, Parvathyammal, Pathmanayak brothers Sivaguru, Charavananpavan (Deputy General Manager, Electricity Board), Sathasivampillai (Assistant Director Agricultural Engineering) pre-

continued on page 31

continued from page 30
deceased him. He is also survived by his grandchildren Melanie, Sharmila, Premila, Rohan, Clara, Pamela, Mithila, Aynkaran, Brahman and great grandchild Nathaniel Gardner. Funeral took place at Upminster Crematorium, on 14.9.2000 - Mount Crest, Widworthy Hayes, Hutton Mount, Brentwood, Essex.

(Appreciations on page 32)

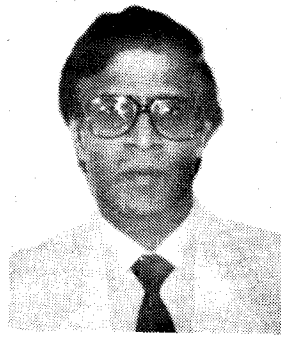


Kathirgamar Nallathamby Rajanayagam (formerly City

Engineer, Gaborone, Botswana and also was Civil Engineer in Zambia, Nigeria and Sri Lanka) son of the late Mr. & Mrs. Kathirgamar Nallathamby; beloved husband of Kanagasavundary; loving father of Dr. Nirmalan (UK) and Niranjan (UK); father-in-law of Deepalakshmi; grandfather of Aneesha and Prajeshan; brother of Nesamany (Australia), Dr. Pathmanathan (Sri Lanka), late Thangaratnam and late Kanagamany; brother-in-law of Ratnasabapathy (Australia), Thayapathy, Ponnudurai (both of Sri Lanka) and the late Suppiah passed away on 2nd of October 2000 and the funeral took place on 7th October.

The members of the family wish to thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and floral tributes and assisted them in several ways during the period of bereavement. - 18 Stratford Court, Kingston Road, New Malden, Surrey KT3 5NU.

IN MEMORIAM



In ever loving memory of **Dr. Rasiyah Dharmendra** on the third anniversary of his passing away on 18.10.97.

He is sadly missed and his memory is treasured greatly by his loving wife Vimala, his children Bernard and Angelina, his loved ones and friends who were dear to him.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- Nov 1 All Saints Day.
- Nov 2 Skantha Sashti Viratham ends; All Saints Day.
- Nov 3 Thirukalyanam; Feast of St. Martin.
- Nov 4 Feast of St. Charles; South London Tamil Welfare Group (SLTWG) Drop In. Tel: 020 8542 3285.
- Nov 5 7pm. Sita by Maestro Ustad Vilayat Khan with Hidayat Hussain at Royal Festival Hall. Tel: 020 7960 4242.
- Nov 7 Eekathasi.
- Nov 9 Pirathosam.
- Nov 11 Full Moon SLTWG Women's Front meets. Tel: 020 8542 3285.
- Nov 12 Karthigai.
- Nov 15 Sankadhara Chaturthi; Feast of St. Albert.
- Nov 17 7.30pm Illustrated Seminar on Drawings & Paintings of the famous Sri Lankan Painter & Poet, George Claessen at Main Lecture Theatre, School of Oriental & African Studies, Malet Street, London WC1. Seminar Panel H.E. Prof. Senaka Bandaranayake, Denis Bowen, Harry Eccleston, Martin Russell & Shamil Wanigaratne. All Welcome.
- Nov 18 6.45pm A Dance in the Dark by Nityanaji (India's only Visually Handicapped Professional Dance Group) in aid of Tamil Orphans Trust at Copeland Community School Hall, Cecil Avenue, Wembley, Middx. Tel: 020 8908 1101/8422 3943.

- Nov 21 Krishna Eekathasi.
 - Nov 22 Feast of St. Cecilia.
 - Nov 23 Pirathosam; Feast of St. Clement.
 - Nov 25 Amavasai/SLTWG Drop In. Tel: 020 8542 3285.
 - Nov 29 Sathurthi.
 - Nov 30 Feast of St. Andrews.
- At Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 020 7381 3086/4608. Fax: 020 7381 8758. Net: www.bhavan.net**
- Nov 9 7pm Kriya Yoga by Paramahansa Prajnananda. All welcome.
 - Nov 12 12pm-2pm Indian Dance Workshop by Dr. Sunil Kothari.
 - Nov 25 6.30pm Bharatanatyam & Kuchipudi Dance by Vyjayanti Kashi.

Siyamini's Excellent Vocal Aranjeteram



The Vocal Aranjeteram of thirteen year old Siyamini, disciple of Smt Ambika Thamotheram, daughter of Sivananthan and Kala of Edware, UK and student West London Tamil School took place at the Beck Theatre, Hayes, UK on 30th July 2000. The programme commenced with the Varnamin Navavagamalika, followed by 'Vinayaka' in Hamsadvani Ragam, the Pancharatna Kriti 'Sathinchane', Kaarunya devi in Kalyani Raga with elaborate Raga Alapana and Swaraprastharam and finally 'Nagumo' in Aberi ragam for the first half.

The second half consisted of the Ragam, Thanam, Pallavi in Kamboji Ragam with Ragamalika Swaras which Siyamini sang with ease. Bharathiyar's 'Chinnan Chiru Kiliye' and 'Alay Payuthe' came next finishing off with Dr. Balamurali Krishna's Thillana in Kathanakuthukala ragam to mention a few.

Siyamini's sense of Sruthi and Rhythm was impeccable. continued on page 32

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She rendered the music with such confidence, which kept the audience spellbound from beginning to end. Siyamini was accompanied on the Violin by Sri L. Kothandapani, on the Mridangam by Sri Muthu Sivaraja, on the Gatam by Sri R.N. Prakash, on the morsing by Sri K. Sitham-paranathan and on the Thambura by Uma Kumarasingam.

The Chief Guest Prof. R. Balarajan from the University of London, in his speech commended young Siyamini and her illustrious Guru Smt Ambika Thamotheeram for the excellent performance.

The programme was ably compered in Tamil and English by Dr. Smt Kanchana Sivalingam.

Congratulations to West London Tamil School for producing a young artist of high calibre. We hope there will be many more to follow in the future.

Sri Shankar

Mr. R. Paramakuru - Tributes

Judge Ramaswamy Paramakuru, of Puloly West, Point Pedro, Sri Lanka after a brilliant career both at school and at the Law College, entered the legal profession as a Proctor and Notary Public. He followed the footsteps of his father, the late Mr. V. Ramaswamy, Crown Proctor of Anuradhapura. Truly can it be said that Mr. Paramakuru, or Param as he was known among his fellow judges and friends, was a worthy son of a worthy father.

However the legal profession could not hold him for long and he became a Rural Court President. During that period there was an unwritten rule that Rural Court Presidents, who were proctors, would not be promoted in the Judicial Service.

Urged by the desire to reach greater heights in that service, Param got back to the law books and sat the examination for the admission of Advocates. My first contact with Param at a personal level, was when we entered the examination hall for the admission of advocates. The late E.R.S.R. Coomaraswamy President's Counsel, Param and I obtained first class passes at that examination and we were in that order at that examination. It was only because Mr. Coomaraswamy and Param were sitting this examination as proctors, that I was awarded the final examination scholarship that year.

Soon thereafter Param was appointed to the Judicial Service and the rapid rise in the service was stemmed by the fact that his entry into that service had been late. He reached the age of compulsory retirement, while serving as a District Judge. I followed Param into the Judicial Service and our examination hall acquaintance duly ripened to a close friendship. At one time we became neighbours, he occupying the Additional District Judge's bungalow and I, the Magistrate's bungalow at Jaffna. This helped me to meet and come to know his family. Param was a great family man,

proud of his progeny who were carefully nurtured by him and guided to become, as later events have confirmed, specialists in their chosen fields. Param was a devout Hindu, scrupulously practising it's tenets and leading his flock towards a righteous life.

As a fellow Judicial Officer I found the opportunity and the privilege of studying the techniques and approach to decision making. He was ever willing not only to share his expertise with another but also to learn even from a junior officer. The inexorable march of time stopped him in his tracks and sent to retirement a brain which had the makings of that of a brilliant Judge. Duty done, he has earned his rest.

Farewell, My Friend, may you achieve in the hereafter, that for which, you strove so hard in this world.

M. Jamal

Retired Supreme Court Judge, Sri Lanka.
(2)

When I read the news of the passing away of the greatest District Judge of our times, Mr. Paramaguru I felt sad over his demise.

My first contact with him was when I was a law student. Thereafter, my association with him became closer and I had the privilege of appearing before him as counsel in the District Court of Point Pedro. I admired his impartiality as he was extremely harsh on me for espousing the cause in a bad case. All lawyers who had the privilege of appearing before him saw in him, the ideal qualities of a judicial officer as litigants who appeared before him went away with the satisfaction that they had gone before the temple of justice and accepted with humility his judgement. So much so, even the Supreme Court very rarely revised or set aside his judgements. He was always cool, calm and collected, but whenever the occasion demanded he was shrewd and stern. His sight was a sight full of love and care towards everyone. He carried the highest traditions of the legal profession having inherited them from his father, Mr. Ramasamy, Crown Proctor of Anuradhapura.

After retirement he was sought after by several litigants in the Jaffna Province, and there too he proved his prowess as an efficient lawyer. Vadamaratchchi has become synonymous with Paramaguru and in legal circles, the map of Point Pedro appears in the minds of lawyers with the picture of Mr. Paramaguru as a great and pleasant person, who did not harm or disappoint anyone by his words or deeds.

We console ourselves by thinking that he is living in the form of his better half, children and grandchildren. I pray to God almighty that his soul rests in peace, according to his Hindu faith and convey my deepest sympathies to his wife, children and other members of the family.

P. Sivaloganathan,

Attorney-at-law, Colombo.

MIOT's 'Teardrops' Programme 2000

MIOT organised their annual Teardrops 2000 programme in two parts. The first part was a postgraduate medical meeting entitled 'Effects of war on children' chaired by Dr. P. Kukathasan. He traced the suffering our people are undergoing due to the 16 year war and how over 60,000 lives have been lost.

Dr. K. Puvanendran, Consultant Community Paediatrician, South Essex Health Authority gave details of various physical and psychological effects caused in the short and long term by the war in the North and East of Sri Lanka. He explained how even development of foetuses could be affected and the long term problems caused and the ways by which we could overcome these harmful effects.

This was followed by a moving account by Rev. Sr. Christabel, Director of Annai Illam Project, Kilinochchi with case histories of three victims of war, the post traumatic stress they underwent and how the organisation had helped the suffering families in the homeland.

The second part which followed was a cultural programme which commenced with the 'Mangala Villaku Etral' by MIOT Vice-President Dr. Easwaran Velauthapilla and the Presidential address by Dr. Mathi Chandrakumar who detailed the various steps taken with other like minded organisations to help the suffering Tamils in the homeland. His reflective enthusiasm and determination to highlight the MIOT cause were reverberated in the welcome speeches by Junior MIOT President Sayesh Maheswaran in English and Kugan Sathiyanantharajah in Tamil. The following cultural items followed:

1. Flute recital by Senthungan Kulandran and Crishanth Sivarasan - Students of Mr. P. Gnanavarathan, accompanied by Amuthan Chandrakumar on Miruthangam. They won the hearts of the audience.

2. Kadavul Valtu sung by Aishaini Puvanendran and Kalaiyashini Puvanendran. Their sweet voices were ideal for the thevarems they sang.

3. Miruthangam performance by Kuruparan Kuhathasan, Rajeevkumar Kulendran, Amuthan Chandrakumar, Nishanth Sivarasan and Rajive Poobalasingham. The youngsters showed great enthusiasm rich with emotion.

4. Flute and Violin recital by B. Paranavan, S. Pragash, S. Pratheep, S. Sinthuja, U. Mithula, G. Kamsini and Balasaraswathy - Students of Mr. P. Gnanavarathan. A professional show of melodic talent.

After the first half of the entertainment, the Chief Guest Rev. Fr. Professor S.J. Emmanuel made an emotional speech on the importance of remembering the sufferings of the Tamils caught in the war-zone of the North-East region of Sri Lanka and praised MIOT for its own exemplary efforts

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in the battle against disease, poverty, crime and desolation in Sri Lanka. The entertainment continued.

5. Kavithai was sung by Agalya Sivakumar, Kugan Sathianantharajah, Thanushnithiya Saravanapavananthan and Maharishan Saravanapavananthan.

6. Amusing social drama entitled 'Marakka Moodiyatha Silar' directed by Miss. Nimilini Karunanithi and performed by students of Naalvar Tamil Academy.

7. Dances to Barathi's song and The Freedom Song by Meera Kamalanathan, student of Mrs. V. Ingran, which brilliantly revealed poise, agility and flexibility.

At the end of this delightful and illuminating evening, Gayathiri Illangairatnam proposed a vote of thanks.

Karthic Kukathasan.

Tamil Internet Conference in Singapore.



The Tamil Internet 2000 conference (T12000) was held from 22nd to 24th July 2000 at the Suntec Convention Centre, in Suntec City, Singapore.

The aims of The Tamil Internet organisation are (a) To address a wide range of issues pertaining to the development and the use of Tamil computing and the Tamil Internet. (b) To attract entrepreneurs and professionals involved in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to exchange ideas and explore business and employment opportunities. (c) To inform and educate the ordinary public on the benefits of ICT.

The conference and exhibition, which were highly successful and constructive attracted approximately 35,000 people (30% students, 40% youngsters and 30% adults). People who had been communicating via e-mail met face to face for the first time.

Mr. Sivagurunatha Pillai, Computer Officer, Education Department, Goldsmith College, University of London and Lecturer at South College in ICT presented a paper at the conference entitled 'The role of ICT in Community Language'. At present he is a member of International Forum for Information Technology in Tamil (INFITT) General Council representing Europe. All the papers can be downloaded from the Internet. [Http://www.tamilinayam.org](http://www.tamilinayam.org)

At the end of the third and final day, T12000 formed a committee called IMFITT. The purpose of this committee is to exchange information and ideas about technological developments and to work together for the development of Tamil language on the Internet. Five sub-committees were elected to cover different aspects. Mr. Pillai is committee member of the WEB educational INFITT working group.

Email:siva@gold.ac.uk

The next conference for year 2001 will be held in Malaysia.

Mr. K. Gunaratnam – Teacher, Administrator & Social Worker – A Tribute

With a deep feeling of sadness, I would like to write a few words of appreciation of my departed friend Mr. Gunaratnam. My friendship with Gunam was long and deep – going back to more than four decades. We had a common wavelength in our thinking and deliberations, and found common grounds in working together in many educational and social projects particularly in the Northern province of Sri Lanka.

Gunam in his own way had been a very useful member of our community, fully dedicated to educational, social and cultural betterment of our people. He started his career as a teacher at Vigneswara College, Karaveddy. Soon he became a Circuit Education Officer for the Jaffna Town Region. Already he had become very popular with his fellow teachers and the public, getting involved in educational and professional organisations like the Northern Province Science Teachers Association (NPSTA) and the Northern Province Teachers Association (NPTA). Gunam held very important offices in these organisations, helping them in all their activities relating to the improvement of child education and teacher pupil relationship.

When the NPSTA initiated a long term National programme - 'The Hydrobiological Survey of the Tondamannar Lagoon' - with the twin objectives of developing Scientific Knowledge and Skills among the students and helping the Government Water Resources Board, Gunam's contribution towards its success was substantial. He had the distinction of reading his own research paper on a section of the project at the Ceylon Association for the Advancement of Science on behalf of the NPSTA.

Gunam had the opportunity to exhibit his creative qualities and administrative efficiency when he became Principal of Jaffna Nelliady MahaVidyalaya, // Karaveddy(J/NMMV).

At a time when all schools in the Jaffna District were geared almost totally for an academically oriented structure, he made J/NMMV a model school exemplifying the need of the society. He introduced for the first time Agriculture as a course of study, also Horticulture, Poultry farming, Fish culture and the like creating an environment

for the participation of a large section of the student population and making it meaningfully society oriented. At the same time he was careful in maintaining high academic standards.

Even when he was in South Africa he did his best to teach Hinduism to our children resident in that country. Even though Hinduism was not his field of study he felt the need for it and studied the subject for the benefit of our community there.

After coming to the U.K. in 1992 very strangely his health started to deteriorate and soon he became confined to the home. But he never failed in his contribution to our community in the U.K. Gunam wrote on Hinduism in the Kalasam Magazine for the benefit of our children as he passionately felt that religion is an integral component of child development.

He held very strong political views. He had a very clear analytical mind. Gunam was a thinker and a rationalist, slow to speak, measuring every word he uttered, absolutely steady and confident and a pleasant conversationalist. His ever smiling nature and mild temperament made him quite at home in any company. He had a very wide circle of friends from religious workers to politicians.

His one important interest was to find suitable partners for our youngsters both within the family and outside. He was a very successful matchmaker. Even two days prior to his death he rang from his hospital bed to enquire for some details about a party interested in the marriage of their son. Before I could go back to him I received the sad news from his daughter.

Above all Gunam was a very devoted husband and loving father and grand father. This was revealed from the way he was looked after with much affection and care by the entire family.

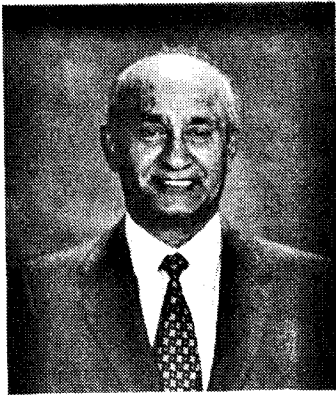
I can imagine how much his wife, children, grand children and in-laws will miss him. May his soul rest in peace.

T. Puthirasingam.

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Mr. Karthigesu Sittampalam Mahadevan – A Tribute



Mr. Mahadeva (Maha to everyone who knew him) passed away in Wellington, New Zealand on 20th July 2000, plunging the large circle of his relatives, friends and the Tamil community in Wellington in great sorrow. Maha was kind hearted, generous and ever willing to help others and was very popular where ever he lived and worked.

He worked for the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, Colombo climbing the ladder of success to become its chief Administrative Officer. During his working career in Colombo he joined the Y.M.C.A. and took great interest in basket-

ball and played for the Western Province Basketball Team. He represented his Bank at basketball and helped them to win several Mercantile Division Championships. As a member of the Ceylon National Basketball Team he toured most of the South East Asian countries with them. Whilst playing for the Ceylon team he was coaching most of the teams of the prominent colleges in Colombo and the University of Colombo and helped them to win several championships. He was appointed National Coach and held the post till 1980.

Maha moved with his family in 1984 to New Zealand and paved the way for his children to attain professional qualifications and achieve good career prospects. He was an active member of the Wellington Tamil Society and Sai Organisation. As President of the New Zealand Hindu Association, he successfully saw the completion and opening of their first Hindu Temple in March 2000.

Maha is my cousin and became my brother-in-law after I married his youngest sister Neelambal. Blessed with a happy marriage, he was a devoted husband, father and grandfather. His passing away is a great loss to his family, relatives and friends and members of our community in New Zealand.

May his soul rest in Peace.

C. Viyakesparan.

Sri Lankan Doctor Honoured

Dr. B. Indrakrishnan, Consultant Physician in Gastroenterology and Hepatology Atlanta, USA has been elected an honoured member and listed in the Lexington's Directory of distinguished executives and professionals of North America, Millennium Edition. The directory recognises various professionals annually and the inclusion is limited to those who have demonstrated leadership and achievements in their field, industry or profession.

Dr. Indrakrishnan of Atlanta Gastroenterology Associates, the largest, premier single speciality private practice group in Atlanta is a clinical assistant professor of Medicine at the Emory University School of Medicine, a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, American Colleges of Gastroenterology and of Physicians. He serves as a questions author and relevance reviewer in the examination board of the American College of Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology and is in the health and public policy committee of the American College of Physicians.

Dr. Indrakrishnan, a 1985 graduate of the University of Colombo, an old boy of Royal College, Colombo is the youngest son of Mr. R. Bhuvanandram, former director in the Ministry of Industries and Consultant advisor in the Ministry of Fisheries, Sri Lanka.

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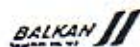
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