

Tamil **TIMES**

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1. Norway's special envoy Eric Solheim and LTTE leader V Pirabakaran meeting in the Wannai
2. Eric Solheim
3. LTTE leader V Pirabakaran
4. Victims affected by heavy floods in eastern Sri Lanka





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

-Voltaire

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Prospects for Peace Talks

The prospects for peace talks resuming between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have certainly brightened in recent weeks.

The current peace process was kicked off following the acceptance by the government and the LTTE of Norway assuming the role of a facilitator for the resumption of talks between the warring parties. It gathered momentum after the meeting between the LTTE leader and the Norwegian special envoy Erik Solheim and their two-hour preliminary talks on 1 November in the course of which the LTTE leader had indicated his willingness resume negotiations with the government.

In recent months there has been unprecedented interest shown by the international community to set the peace process back on track. The pressure on both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to resume negotiations has also been considerable.

Norway is not alone in its difficult and demanding role. It has the total support of all European countries including Britain, the USA and above all India, Sri Lanka's closest northern neighbour whose special interest in the developments in the island has been taken full account of by other countries.

Expressing its support the European Union which represents most of the western European countries said, "The European Union is strongly in favour of these negotiations, which must take substantial account of the

aspirations of the Tamil minority while respecting the cultural and religious diversity of Sri Lanka and not undermining the inalienable principle of the territorial integrity and unity of the country."

The extent of interest shown by the British government in a peaceful negotiated political settlement in Sri Lanka was reiterated with force during the recent visit to Colombo by the British Deputy Foreign Secretary Peter Hain: "Britain stands ready to help Sri Lanka in any way we can, and remains fully supportive of Norwegian peace facilitation efforts in its dialogue with the Government and the LTTE. I am convinced that both the Government's insistence upon the territorial sovereignty of the whole island, and the LTTE's objective of autonomy, can be secured. But for that to happen the shooting must stop and the talking must start."

It is in this context that so much interest is placed on the traditional annual "Heroes Day" speech to be delivered by V Pirabakaran, the leader of the LTTE, on 27 November. The recent flurry of diplomatic efforts with representatives of foreign governments visiting Colombo declaring their interest in a negotiated political settlement has certainly raised the profile of the LTTE leader's speech. It cannot be doubted that the international community is looking for a clear signal from the LTTE that they are committed to peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The opportunity presented now by the unprecedented interest shown by the international community must be seized by all those who claim to have the interest of the people at heart with a view to bringing an end to the bloodletting that has characterised Sri Lanka's physical and political landscape during the last two decades earning it the notoriety of being the "Killing Fields of Asia".

It should be realised that the strategy war pursued to achieve the political goals has failed. On the contrary, it has brought disaster to the country and all its people. The country has been drained of its material and human resources. Tens of thousands have died on and off the battlefields.

Particularly the people of the north and east of the island have suffered the most. Death and destruction have been the order of the day during the last twenty years. People have been displaced in their hundreds of thousands. The frequent shifts and twists in the military balance as between government forces and the LTTE have meant whole communities of people being pushed from pillar to post and forced to live in primitive conditions undergoing unendurable hardship. There has been a mass exodus of people, particularly from the Tamil community, to other parts of the world leaving it weakened, depleted and dismembered. Continuation of the strategy of war would mean further death, destruction, depletion and dismemberment.

One hopes that the current efforts to bring the government and the LTTE to the negotiating table succeeds and the parties have the courage to commit themselves to the task of peacefully negotiating until a political settlement is reached. To be expected are the reactionary forces representing ethnic chauvinism, extremism and exclusivist sectarianism mounting campaigns of protest to disrupt any move to a negotiated peaceful political settlement. These are the forces that have brought the island and its people to their present predicament. They must be resisted, overwhelmed and marginalised by progressive forces dedicated to the ideals of multiculturalism, diversity, constitutionalism and democracy actively assisted by responsible political and civic leaders, peace groups and human rights organisations.

As the British Deputy Foreign Minister Peter Hain put it, "There is no future for a Sri Lanka paralysed by dogma, intransigence and cruelty. Compromises, difficult decisions and tough choices will be needed, some painful. This is a time for boldness, vision and strong leadership. The Sri Lankan people deserve no less from their leaders, both Sinhalese and Tamil."

● PROSPECTS FOR PEACE BRIGHTEN

The prospects of a ceasefire and a negotiated settlement in the civil war in Sri Lanka may brighten if the warring parties seize the moment now to implement measures that will build mutual confidence, according to the Norwegian special envoy, Mr. Erik Solheim.

In an exclusive conversation with "The Hindu" on 22 November, Mr. Solheim said "simultaneous and reciprocal actions by the two parties" could help to bring about the necessary environment for a cessation of hostilities and a dialogue. Given the deep distrust between the two sides, Mr. Solheim said even small steps could be considered "substantive".

While conceding the extraordinary complexity of the conflict, Mr. Solheim told a press conference later, that he remained hopeful of his on-going efforts to bring the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to the negotiating table. The cautious diplomat that he is, Mr. Solheim was reluctant to go into any details of his talks with Colombo and the LTTE and the prospect of bridging the differences.

Mr. Solheim's optimism may be based on the reality of a military stalemate on the ground and the success of the President, Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga, in the recent elections. A recognition of the futility of a military solution and the inability of either side to gain a comprehensive victory over the other, it is believed, might now encourage both sides to consider a negotiated settlement.

Mr. Solheim briefed the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, on his recent contacts with the Sri Lankan parties, including his meeting with leader of LTTE, Mr. Velupillai Prabhakaran.

Questioned on the prospects of a ceasefire, Mr. Solheim said "any kind of a cessation of hostilities or de-escalation of the conflict" may be linked to some form of discussion between the two parties.

Indian analysts of the Sri Lankan situation here say the LTTE may now be favourably inclined to begin a dialogue after a formal ceasefire. Colombo, on the other hand, may be ready for a cessation of hostilities only when a modicum of political understanding is reached

● EU SUPPORTS NORWEGIAN PEACE EFFORT

The European Union has reiterated its support for Norwegian efforts to bring peace to Sri Lanka.

NEWS ROUNDUP

"The European Union stresses the importance of the meeting held on 1 November 2000 between Mr. Eric Solheim and Mr. Velupillai Prabhakaran, leader of the LTTE, the first such meeting since Norway took on the role of 'facilitator' in the dialogue between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE in February 2000. In this connection, the European Union reiterates its support for the Norwegian initiative," a statement issued on 13 November on behalf of the European Union said.

The statement added, "The European Union would urge the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to take the opportunity offered today of a dialogue which could bring about a negotiated solution and put an end to an ethnic conflict which has been the cause of much suffering for the Sri Lankan people for nearly twenty years.

"The European Union is strongly in favour of these negotiations, which must take substantial account of the aspirations of the Tamil minority while respecting the cultural and religious diversity of Sri Lanka and not undermining the inalienable principle of the territorial integrity and unity of the country."

The central and eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, Iceland and Liechtenstein members of the European economic area, align themselves with this declaration, the press release stated.

● BRITAIN BACKS PEACE MOVES

The Sri Lankan government is looking for a signal from the LTTE on for possible talks on ways to end the ethnic conflict, the British Deputy Foreign Minister Peter Hain who is on a visit to the island said on 23 November.

"They are waiting to see what Mr. Prabhakaran's national Heroes Day statement says," Hain told a news conference at the end of two days of meeting political leaders. "They are waiting for signals from the LTTE."

Hain, one of many western politicians visiting Sri Lanka to try to push forward a nascent peace process, said that after talking with government leaders, including Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickrematunge. He felt Sri Lanka had no precon-

ditions to any talks on ways to end the fighting which has killed more than 61,000 in the last 17 years.

"I was told that there are no preconditions... I don't think it is helpful to set preconditions if you are genuine about making peace," he said. "Everybody has to turn their backs on terrorism, on war and on the belief that there can be a military solution to this conflict," the UK Minister said.

Hain reiterated that he believed the LTTE realised that a military solution would not work. "All the messages we have received from the Norwegians and through other channels have been to the effect that the LTTE understands that," he said.

Mr Hain told reporters that the Sri Lankan government had asked them to proscribe the LTTE. "We are considering it very seriously," Hain said, cautioning that the outcome would depend on interpretation of new anti-terrorism laws that would go into effect next year in Britain where the LTTE has its International Secretariat.

At the same time, Hain said he was asking both the Tamil Tigers and the Colombo government to begin a dialogue in line with an initiative by Norway to bring the two parties to the negotiating table. "It is in everybody's interest to end the military conflict," Hain said. "We have given a strong message to the LTTE that there is no alternative to peace talks. And that has been my advise to the government too."

Hain said it was not realistic to expect the LTTE to abandon their main objective of a separate state called Eelam, but its leadership appeared convinced that there was no international support for a such a move. Sri Lanka's Tamils were in a better position to win a greater degree of autonomy with the right of self-determination in all most all aspects of their day to day life through talks, he said.

"Tamil people don't want a fancy constitutional structure," Hain said. "They want jobs.. to go about their business in peace... The interests of all parties can be reconciled if the parties are willing to sit down and talk."

He said LTTE leaders should also take advantage of the latest peace bid as the setting up of a international court under the United nations could leave rebel leaders open to prosecution. The LTTE, he said, had committed "brutal acts of war." "If the LTTE turns its back on brutal acts of war and come to the negotiating table, they will be spared being brought to the

international court...”, he said.

Hain said adding that they were in consultation with the US and neighbouring India over the developments in Sri Lanka.

Hain’s visit comes just before Karl Inderfurth, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian affairs, arrives on 27 November for two days of talks with senior government officials and non-governmental organizations.

The President Chandrika Kumartunga is reportedly not scheduled to meet the visiting British Minister and the US Assistant Secretary of State. The British High Commission and the American Embassy in Colombo have been informed by the President Secretariat of the President’s inability to meet the two foreign envoys as she would not be in the island.

Mr. Hain however met the Constitutional Affairs Minister Prof. G L Peiris and the Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar. He also met with opposition leader Ranil Wickremasinghe, SLMC leader Rauf Hakheem and TULF General Secretary R. Sambanthan. During these meetings Mr. Hain had reportedly told the ministers and the other leaders that the only solution for the ethnic conflict was apolitical one and stressed that the problem couldn’t be solved through war. He has also intimated the willingness of the British government to offer assistance on the same lines of the recent Oslo initiative.

While, Minister Hain’s visit has been welcomed by many political parties, the Sinhala Urumaya and the Jantha Vimukthi Peramuna have criticised his and government’s intervention in what they describe as the country’s internal affairs. The Sinhala Urumaya picketed outside the British Council where Mr. Hain delivered a speech on the British experiences in addressing the problems relating to Northern Ireland.

The JVP also declined to participate in the discussion with Mr. Hain. JVP Parliamentarian Wijitha Herath told the press that they were opposed to any third party mediation. “Whether it is Norway or Britain, we consider them all one foreign force with one agenda. They all want to fulfill their ends,” he alleged. “As a policy the JVP was opposed to this process and we won’t participate in today’s discussions with Mr. Hain,” he said.

● JVP’S OPPOSITION TO PEACE MOVES

The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) has commenced a virulent campaign

against Norway’s role in the peace initiative in Sri Lanka. The JVP has always projected a strident anti-foreigner image to bolster its “patriotic” credentials. It might be recalled that it was against Indian intervention to resolve the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka through the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 1987 and the induction of Indian troops by the Sri Lankan government to ensure its implementation that the JVP unleashed its campaign of violence and terror during the years 1987-1989. Almost the entire known then leadership of the JVP perished when the security forces retaliated with massive counter-terror operations which resulted in the killing of tens of thousands.

Now after a decade, the JVP is a parliamentary party having secured 8 seats in the recently held elections. In this changed context, the question many ask is whether the JVP will limit its campaign of opposition to the Norwegian peace initiative to demonstrations and protest rallies, or will it again resort to similar violent and terror tactics as it did earlier. Up to now it has confined itself to press statements and protests.

The Norwegians have tried to convince the JVP of their bona fides and invited the leadership to visit their country. Not only has the JVP rejected the invitation, but also has responded with what many see as a diatribe of gross abuse. In its letter dated 8 November addressed to the Ambassador for Norway in Sri Lanka, the JVP has stated, “No leader or a member of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna will accept an invitation of your government to visit your country as long as you allow LTTE to engage in activities against our country, Sri Lanka..... We are now aware that you have met LTTE leaders some where in Sri Lanka, not in another country called Tamil Eelam. Tamil Eelam, we should emphasise will never become a reality. It will never be allowed to become a reality by the joint efforts of the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people of Sri Lanka. We hope you are well aware that “Tamil Eelam” is not a place where Tamil speaking Muslims will be tolerated. It is absurd to even mention about the place of the Sinhala people in Tamil Eelam. We do not know whether you and your government have already recognised the so-called Tamil Eelam as a separate state and is not giving publicity to that decision for the time being until you fulfil your task of whitewashing the tarnished image of the separatists.....

“Our stand on the “national question” is very clear. Our policy declaration,

which was published in thousands since 1977, very clearly elaborates our policy. We have pronounced our unequivocal opposition to racism, communalism and separatism. We are the only political party in Sri Lanka that advocates national unity and equality amongst the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim nationalities. We would like to reiterate what we have explained to you, when we met on your invitation at your embassy. Let us add the following facts too. Norway is a country with warm and hospitable people. In her short history, she has fought for her integrity and sovereignty. She has fought for freedom from being a colony of Sweden and against the aggression of Nazis in World War 2. During the cold war from what it perceived as a threat from the Soviet Union, when countries nearer to the Soviet Union remained neutral, in Norway’s own search for independence and sovereignty, it became an ally of NATO.

“We refer to the constitution of Norway that declares its “official religion” the “Evangelical - Lutheran religion”. This constitution requires that in your country inhabitants professing it (this religion) be bound to bring up their children in the same”. Your country’s Executive Power is the King, who the constitution says must be a member of the official religion. He is also required to “uphold and protect” this religion. Further more, the Chief Executive, the King should have in his council, a majority from this religion. Your Constitution demands that your senior government officials should speak Norwegian and also severely limits the role of international bodies on your internal affairs, specifically forbids foreigners from having the “power to alter the constitution”.

“We differ with some of these chauvinist Norwegian attitudes but recognise Norway’s right to control its own destiny. Norway has a past and laws that we do not agree with, that are racist and discriminatory. Your country was one of the worst offenders in racial attitudes, putting into practice Nazi ideas of racial breeding. One of your Nazi disciples, Quisling was your leader for some time. Norwegian racism still persists in denying equal rights to the country’s original inhabitants, the Saami. They were depicted, as racially inferior and Saami children were not allowed to learn their own language until recently. Although there is a national Question existing in Sri Lanka, such a disgraceful denial of fundamental human rights had never been practised in Sri Lanka. Your official church bans the Saami language and you control in detail their means of

livelihood, namely the rearing of reindeer.

"For several years, your country has been a headquarters of the LTTE that has declared war on our country's sovereignty and provided space and resources for this organisation. Recently your government put pressure on a journalist to be sacked from an agency because she described LTTE activities in your country. You celebrate the short history of your country. Sri Lankans, with 2500 years of history, are also proud of our country and the aim of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) is to improve and add value to that 2500-year-old heritage.

"..... We condemn your racism and chauvinism. Your racism condones LTTE racism and has become an ally to dismember our beloved country. As we respect your sovereign right to govern your own internal affairs, we have the same rights to determine our country's internal affairs. We consider you a colonialist. Sri Lanka has a five hundred-year history of experience in resisting colonialism. We are weathered by 2500 years of external aggression. We have fought for liberation in 1818 and 1848. That is our proud history.

We request you to immediately close down LTTE offices in your country and force them to stop their war. We denounce your interference in Sri Lanka's affairs. If you choose to continue, we the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and the people of Sri Lanka will resist your interference in our own internal affairs through every peaceful means possible.

"You have become a mouthpiece of the LTTE. This is clear from what you have said after meeting with LTTE leaders. Your credentials as a peace broker have been tarnished as a result. But your credentials as a peace broker were already damaged beyond repair in front of the whole world, when the so called peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians failed miserably and led to the killing of hundreds of Palestinians by Zionist fanatics. The whole world is watching vigilantly what the so-called peacemakers are doing to stop this bloodshed.

"Your interference in this crisis resulted in the division of Palestine. You created an enormous gap between Palestinians and Jews. In the same manner, your interference will create a separation that will plunge Sri

Lanka into more bloodshed, not only amongst Sinhala and Tamil people in the separated areas but also among Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people in unseparated Sri Lanka.

"Have you asked the LTTE leaders,

as well as other Tamil separatist leaders living in exile to save their lives from the LTTE, that if a separation occurs in Sri Lanka in the future, what will be the plight of more than 60% of the whole Tamil population now live in provinces other than the North and the East enjoying the traditional hospitality and tolerance of the Sinhala, Muslim and anti-separatist Tamil people? What is the guarantee that the ugly process of ethnic cleansing that was consciously launched by the Tamil separatists (not only LTTE) will not be repeated in reverse as racial tensions are increased by separatism becoming a fact. These tensions will put pressure on Tamils pushing them to the Northern and Eastern provinces. Tamil separatists who describe themselves as liberators of Tamil people are short-sighted in fuelling racial tensions. They are the real enemies of the Tamil people.

"You advocate separatism which will lead to more bloodshed, whereas we advocate national unity that will lead to peace and prosperity.

"Give Saami the hunting rights to their traditional homelands. Allow freedom of religion to those born Lutherans. Give language rights to non-Norwegian speaking citizens of Norway.

"Ugly Norwegian, go home, There is much for you to do there".

● THREE-PHASED SOLUTION TO NORTH-EAST CRISIS

EPDP leader and Minister of Development, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of the North and Tamil Affairs of North and East Douglas Devananda on 20 November spelt out a three phased solution to the ethnic problem that had been placed before the PA government.

He wanted the state to ensure that the North East Provincial Council is able to exercise whatever maximum powers available in the constitution under a political leadership.

Under phase one while we favour political leadership for North East Provincial Council with representation from the people at an election to be held soon, President Chandrika Kumaratunga favours an interim council for the North East at present taking into consideration the ground situation, Devananda told journalists at a news conference on 20 November.

In the second phase as it is difficult to obtain the necessary two-thirds majority immediately, our proposal is to table Chapter 17A of the Constitution before all the Provincial Councils and get it

passed with a simple majority to amend this chapter so that powers can be increased to the councils.

Once this amendment is passed by a simple majority it could be implemented in practical terms without delay. Under this system you do away with concurrent list and grant more powers to the provinces adding certain things in the package, he said.

Through this process all provinces can enjoy more powers and the people will have confidence in the political process. This would lead to confidence building among all communities as people will have faith in the government in devolving powers which would not lead to separation, he explained.

In the third of the phases, once the confidence had been built one could decide on character of unit where majority of people, the UNP, PA can be brought into obtain their support for the necessary two-third majority. If the LTTE likes they could enter this process at that time, the minister noted.

Mr. Devananda said that he had discussed this position of his proposal with President Chandrika Kumaratunga many times and it has been agreed to introduce these measures.

So now we call upon the government to set up an interim council for the North East to give political leadership and powers where all parties having representation from the North East being included in the interim council.

On the issue of government's peace negotiations with the LTTE at the initiative of the Norwegian Government's Special Envoy Mr. Eric Solheim, the EPDP will not stand in the way of the LTTE wanting to enter democratic political process, Devananda said adding, "But one should be cautious, wait and see if the LTTE is really serious and sincere in negotiations. We believe that today the LTTE has been pressurised by the international community to enter negotiations."

Along with EPDP leader and Minister Douglas Devananda at the press briefing were advisor Dr. K. Vigneswaran, MP S. Thavarajah, Ex-MP S. Sivadasan, MP Kugendran, Ex-MP Rasamanikkam, MP Gunasekaram, Mrs. Maheswari Velautham, Co-ordinating Secretary to the Minister (Hindu Affairs and Human Rights).

● INDIA'S 'FLUCTUATING POLICY'

Questions are being raised in military and diplomatic circles about what they de-

scribe as the "fluctuating Indian policy" towards Sri Lanka in the context of the continuing fighting between the LTTE and government forces and the latest developments concerning the Norwegian peace initiative.

It should be noted that, not very long ago, only in April this year, when the Colombo government ran into panic about the fate of 40,000 soldiers in the Jaffna peninsula in the wake of an offensive by the Tamil Tigers and called for help, India firmly said that there would be no Indian military involvement.

Now India has become one of Sri Lanka's main military suppliers following the decision to sell two Sukanya class Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) to Sri Lanka. India is also reported to have decided to share intelligence and carry out joint naval patrol in regard to certain "sensitive areas".

Sri Lanka Navy Commander Vice-Admiral Cecil Tissera who made an official visit to India on November 2 had met several Indian Defence officials, including Indian Defence Secretary Yogendra Narain, Navy Chief Admiral Sushil Kumar, Deputy Army Chief Lt. Gen. Vijay Oberoi and Deputy Air Force Chief Vinod Patney. He could not meet the Chief of the Army and of the Air Force since they were away in Kargil in Jammu-Kashmir.

India's naval assistance had been sought by Sri Lanka Navy in countering the LTTE's arms trafficking operations specially in the high seas. The Indian navy agreed to sell two war ships to the Sri Lankan navy from its Naval Aviation Wing to expand and strengthen the basic infrastructure of the Sri Lanka Navy.

These ships are capable of staging helicopters such as Chetak. This is in fact the special feature of these ships. One of the purchased ships at a cost of US\$ 20 million is due to touch the Lankan waters within a month. This Korean-built ship was commissioned in 1989 at Masan and later was purchased by India where the armaments were equipped.

According to a highly-placed Naval source, since the ship's potential role is changeable, the fire calibre could be modernised and according to the need of the operation more weapons could be affixed when it arrives in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka navy is also expected to get weaponry like surface-to-surface guns fitted in the OPV from India.

The one which is being built at an Indian dockyard is expected to arrive in Sri Lanka by 2002. According to the agree-

ment the latest requirements of the Sri Lankan navy could be amalgamated in this ship while being constructed, according to reliable sources.

The Indian Navy has been training the Sri Lankan naval pilots and sailors following the Sri Lankan Navy signing the deal to purchase Sukanya class OPVs in July. About 100 sailors were sent during the last week of July and another team of 120 sailors were sent during the first week of August to India to be trained on these ships. The visit of the Navy Commander turned out to be a successful one when a Chetak helicopter was given as a complement while an agreement to buy two more Chetak helicopters was entered into during the week-long official visit. However, these Chetaks cannot be used for assault missions but could well be used for spying purposes

Indian sources deny that the recent developments in regard to military and weapons related transactions between Colombo and Delhi represent a sign of Indian involvement in the conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers. They point to the fact that India got its fingers burnt during the period of the IPKF intervention in Sri Lanka later only to be asked to get out when the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government ganged up together in an anti-Indian crusade.

Any assistance given by New Delhi to the Colombo government is resented and denounced by the LTTE. LTTE realises that India has a legitimate interest in the developments concerning its southern island-neighbour, but also knows that it is averse to the division of the island by the creation of a separate state for which the Tamil Tigers are fighting. LTTE has remained a banned organisation in India since the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in September 1991. According to LTTE's main spokesman, Anton Balasingham, the Indian government cannot play any active role in playing a mediatory role in the Sri Lankan conflict until the ban on the LTTE was maintained.

In the meantime, on the military front, amidst continuing fighting between government forces and the Tamil Tigers, reports suggest that the LTTE has acquired more modern sophisticated weapon systems.

A report in a Colombo newspaper (The Weekend Express, 19 November) said, quoting "highly placed defence sources", that the Russian built MI-24 gunship helicopter which was brought down by

LTTE's Radha Anti-Aircraft Wing during an assault mission in Marble Beach, in Trincomalee on October 23 was confirmed to have been hit by Russian-built SA-14 short-range missile. The ill-fated gunship which was salvaged by Naval divers was inspected by a special Russian expert, Colonel Alexander who established the fact that it was hit by an SA-14 missile. These SA-14 and SA-16 heat-seeking missiles are portable and could be launched from the shoulder.

The question troubling the minds of the military brass in Colombo is as to how the LTTE was able to buy these high-tech missiles which were not available in the open market. If one wants to buy it, one has to prove his bona fide. Therefore, they suggest it would have been impossible for a movement like the LTTE to buy it unless a third party with "acknowledged credentials" was involved in the transaction. Now the probe centres around the issue as to whether the LTTE has any bona fide partners at international level.

● EPDP ACCUSES FMM OF 'JOURNALISTIC LAWLESSNESS'

The Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) has denounced the Free Media Movement's (FMM) statements casting suspicion on the Party for the killing of journalist Nimalarajan and accused it of journalistic lawlessness.

The EPDP, which is a constituent of the governing coalition and the leader of which is a cabinet minister, in a press release issued recently stated that FMM has overstepped the limits of journalistic ethics and misused the journalistic freedom and has become politically biased.

The press release added: "The EPDP has not only condemned in strong terms the murder of journalist Nimalarajan, but has also made it clear that it has nothing to do with his killing. But forces that cannot come to terms with the mandate received by us from the people have begun a serious campaign to tarnish our image. These forces are politically motivated and are intent on misleading the ongoing investigations. We wish to make a few points regarding these efforts to implicate the names of the EPDP and Minister Douglas Devananda with the incident.

"Right at the beginning we issued a statement condemning the killing of Nimalarajan. The FMM has chosen not to understand our statement and with mischievous intent has proceeded to distort its contents to the effect that we were jus-

tifying the murder of Nimalarajan. It may be recalled that on several occasions before, we were wrongfully accused by the media of similar deeds, but time had proved our innocence.

For instance, some years back, fingers were pointed at us of being involved in the killing of Major General Denzil Kobbekaduwa and Lalith Athulathmudali.

"In our statement, while condemning the killing of Nimalarajan, we expressed our concern over the dangers that a journalist faced when he stepped beyond the limits of journalistic ethics and got involved with activities of an armed group and surmised that Nimalarajan could have met with his death due to such an involvement.

"If the FMM could issue statements which cast suspicion of the EPDP for the killing, then it is nothing but 'journalistic lawlessness' on the part of the FMM to challenge our right to express our suspicions regarding the killing of Nimalarajan. We also note at the same time that the FMM's actions are such that they overstep the limits of journalistic ethics and the misuse of journalistic freedom, and that they are becoming politically biased. This is clearly proved by the deliberate silence that the FMM adopted when jour-

nalist

Cheliyan Perinpanayagam, a journalist of more than thirty years experience, the Editor of Thinamurusu Atputharajah Nadarajah, Radio Broadcaster Antony Mariyadas, two Mayors of Jaffna and more that ten members of local authorities in the Jaffna Peninsula, were murdered in cold blood.

"We wish to emphasise that the FMM would be worthy of its name only if it would give the same importance to all killings and all violations of human rights, and conduct its activities without any bias.

As long as the war continues, several non-combatant lives are bound to be lost. But only the names of the famous and acquainted would bother us. But a civilised society would not, and should not, tolerate deliberate acts of murder for whatever reasons. While condemning all those who are responsible for the unjustifiable and untimely deaths, we nurture the expectation that everyone in this country would work together to prevent such killings in the future."

• **MORE ARRESTS PROMISED IN CAMP MASSACRE**

Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake told parliament 23 November that

the government would make more arrests in connection with last month's massacre of Tamil detainees at the Bindunuwewa rehabilitation camp. He said, "Our investigations show that around 30 more suspects in the massacre are still at large and need to be arrested." He did not say how many suspects were already in custody, but said they included soldiers, policemen and "people who belong to neither of those two forces."

A machete-wielding mob rampaged through the Bindunuwewa camp near Bandarawela in the country's central highlands on October 25, killing 27 detainees including surrendered Tamil Tiger cadre and child soldiers.

Protests against the carnage by sections of Tamils from the plantation areas turned violent, sparking Sri Lanka's worst inter-communal violence since 1983.

"The government has nothing to hide," said Wickremanayake, promising a "full, fair and impartial inquiry."

Opposition Tamil MPs earlier called for the probe to be conducted by the United Nations or the Commonwealth. Police initially blamed local residents for the massacre but President Chandrika Kumaratunga accused "outside forces" of being responsible. The country's inde-

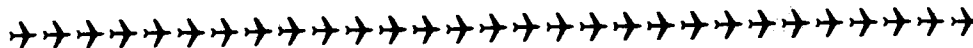
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pendent Human Rights Commission said the killings appears to have been premeditated while other human rights groups accused the authorities of a cover-up.

Investigations have revealed that the massacre was conducted with support from the police. This massacre took place when 70 police officers were on duty that also included STF officers. The day before the incident a team of 25 army officers were also stationed there for security, but at about 1.30 am the police had said that they were not needed and therefore the Army officers had left.

Though there are many stories of inmates attacking first, so far no evidence have been unearthed about any inmate attacking the police, though they were indications of unrest and dissent. There were eight Sinhalese persons working in the camp and none of them had been attacked by the Tamil inmates. The officer in charge had gone inside the day before the attack and he was not harmed in any way by the inmates, who had even sung the national anthem in Sinhala that morning as usual.

Most of the bodies of the victims were found chopped and killed under their own beds and it was obvious that the inmates had run to their rooms and locked the door to escape death, but the assailants had forcibly entered the rooms and done the killing. According to the officer in charge, when he went to the Camp at 8.30 am the attack had already taken place, but investigations suggest that the killing had taken place at 9.30 am. A blue unmarked Van was seen outside the camp on the previous night when the OIC went in, but so far no identification of it had been established.

● AMNESTY URGES FULL JUDICIAL INQUIRY

The London-based Amnesty International in a letter dated 27 October sent to the Sri Lankan President said, "Amnesty International is calling for a full and impartial inquiry into the killing of at least 26 inmates of the Bindunuwewa rehabilitation camp near Bandarawela on 25 October 2000. We also urge you to institute a thorough review of the detention regime affecting people held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and emergency regulations (ERs) to prevent the recurrence of such incidents. Such a review should include a thorough examination of the detention provisions under the ERs, including those for rehabilitation and surrender which we believe were key con-

tributing factors for this latest gruesome incident.

"According to information received, at least 26 inmates, all young Tamil men aged between 14 and 23 undergoing rehabilitation after they were arrested or surrendered as suspected members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), died as a result of injuries sustained in a vicious attack by a mob of hundreds of people from nearby villages. The villagers, all of whom were members of the Sinhalese community, were armed with clubs, machetes and other such implements.

"Apparently, the clash took place in the context of the inmates' agitation for their early release and unrest in the area after posters had appeared a couple of days earlier urging for the closure of the rehabilitation camp. We understand that on the previous day a guard had temporarily been taken hostage by the inmates and that there had been tension in the rehabilitation camp as a result. According to reports received when the mob arrived at the centre, the police officers in charge ran away, allegedly to call for assistance from the Diyatalawa army camp. They failed in their duty to protect the inmates.

"We have noted that according to the government, "external forces" incited the violence. However, it is clear that police personnel deployed at the rehabilitation camp were at the very least negligent in their duty to protect the inmates. It is also of concern that there are allegations that some of these police officers may have been involved in inciting the villagers or may have assisted them in entering the camp.

"We welcome your condemnation of the attack and the swift action taken by sending two police teams to investigate this incident. However, in our view, there is a further need for a full and impartial investigation to ensure that those found to be responsible are brought to justice and that compensation is paid to the victims and the relatives of those who were killed.

"We also see an urgent need for a comprehensive review of the detention regime affecting people detained under the PTA and ERs, including the provisions for rehabilitation and surrender. As you know, the provisions for the rehabilitation of prisoners (ER20) permit a person to be detained indefinitely for the purpose of rehabilitation, on the basis of a Rehabilitation Order issued by the Defence Secretary. ER20A(1) provides that prisoners held in preventive detention or for investigation under the emergency regulations,

or who are detained under Section 9 of the PTA, can be the subject of such orders, which are issued 'in the interest of the welfare of such person'. While the Rehabilitation Order must contain a time period, there is no maximum time limit for the period of rehabilitation specified in ER20A. It appears possible, therefore, for people who were originally detained for preventive or investigative reasons to find themselves subject to lengthy detention under Rehabilitation Orders. Reports of agitation among the inmates of the Bindunuwewa rehabilitation centre about delays in their release, despite the time periods of the

Rehabilitation Orders having expired, confirm this.

"Under ER20, people who surrender to the police or armed forces in connection with a range of offences should be handed over within ten days of the surrender to the care of the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation. They should be assigned to a 'Protective Accommodation and Rehabilitation

Centre' and given appropriate training. Such people can be held for rehabilitation for up to two years. People who "surrender" because they fear they will be attacked by terrorists, may also be detained for rehabilitation themselves.

"Article 9(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Sri Lanka is a party, requires that all people arrested shall be promptly notified of the reasons for their arrest and promptly informed of any charges against them. Article 9(3) of the ICCPR specifies that 'anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge shall be promptly brought before a judge ... and shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or to release'. The provisions for rehabilitation and surrender as set out in ER20 are clearly in violation of both standards.

"In December 1997 and January 2000 we appealed to the then Minister of Justice for a full and impartial inquiry after respectively three and two detainees had been killed at Kalutara prison. We were pleased to hear that a presidential commission of inquiry under High Court Justice A. Raja Nihal Fernando was appointed after the killings in December 1997 with a mandate to investigate the killings and the conduct of prison guards and others involved in the first incident. The commission was also mandated to make recommendations for measures to prevent the recurrence of such incidents and any remedial measures to be taken. It reportedly concluded its investigations on 23 April

1998. To date, however, to our knowledge, the findings of the commission have not been made public, nor is it known what its recommendations were and whether they have been or are being implemented.

"We also learned that the investigations into the killings at Kalutara prison in January 2000 have stalled after the police in April sent the dossier to the Attorney General's department for procedural advice in relation to the holding of an identification parade of the alleged perpetrators.

"This apparent lack of decisive action to bring to justice those responsible for the killings and generally remedy the situation of detainees may have been factors contributing to the recent killings.

"We request that you give these issues your urgent consideration."

● BINDUNUWEWA MASSACRE CRM CALLS FOR PROBE

Once again persons held in a place of detention authorised by the state have been brutally put to death. The victims are some 28 inmates of the Youth Rehabilitation Centre at Bindunuwewa. The Civil Rights Movement (CRM) expresses its shock and deep concern at this appalling event. It

urges the government to ensure that the facts will be properly ascertained and revealed to the public and that all those responsible are identified and brought to book.

At the present stage many aspects are unclear. CRM nevertheless makes the following observations.

- 1) It is clear that the victims were held in the custody of the state and therefore entitled to its special protection.
- 2) An immediate priority must be ensuring the safety of the survivors, reportedly 13 in number who are injured and in hospital. There is reason to believe that the second massacre at the Welikade jail (on 27 July 1983) was an attempt to destroy the survivors of the first massacre (on 25 July 1983) thus eliminating crucial eyewitnesses.
- 3) It is a shocking fact that in 1983 not only were Tamil political prisoners butchered in quick succession on two separate occasions in the same jail, but also that not a single prosecution was instituted against anyone in this connection, nor was a public inquiry held. (The inquests brought in a verdict of homicide and the

police were ordered to make further investigations.) Subsequently there have been other attacks on prisoners - at Welikade, at Mahara, at Kalutara. A relevant factor to be considered in examining the horrific events at Bindunuwewa must be the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of custodial killings in particular, and the general climate of impunity that has characterised human rights violations in Sri Lanka.

4) In the present instance the victims were being held in a camp established by the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation and inquests were held under the normal law. If, however, they had been in police or military custody, then the normal law would be by-passed and a much less satisfactory inquiry held. This is due to a change in the emergency regulations in May this year. It is essential that the normal law relating to inquests be restored in respect of all deaths that occur while in the custody of the state or its agencies.

5) The Bindunuwewa Centre in Bandawela is one of the Centres established under emergency regulations. These regulations provide for rehabilitation of detainees and persons who surrender. Most if

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not all persons under rehabilitation are neither convicted nor under trial for any offence. Some may not be even suspected. For this reason being held in such a centre constitutes a form of detention without trial. These emergency regulations, which have several other unsatisfactory features, need to be reviewed and amended in the light of international human rights standards as a matter of urgency.

6) It is essential that this crime be inquired into thoroughly and efficiently by an independent body. Justice must not only be done but must manifestly be seen to be done. In this regard, it is crucial that the investigation be such as to command the confidence of the public, with special consideration to the ethnic dimensions involved.

● OBJECTION TO NORTH-EAST INTERIM COUNCIL

Some of the Tamil parties represented in Parliament have condemned the government's move as indicated in President Kumaratunga's recent address to the Parliament to set up an interim Council for the North and East.

The views of the Tamil parties are based on the premise that the LTTE remained a major force to be reckoned with and it would be impossible to establish an interim council without its participation or concurrence. The permission or support of the Tigers.

The TULF asserted that the party will continue to take the same stand as before and will not support the establishment of an interim council for the North and East.

Giving reasons, the TULF's Vice President Anandasangari reiterated that without the support of the LTTE no administration is possible in the North and East. In this context he said that it would be an absolute farce to establish a body that cannot function.

Furthermore he added that since it is a foregone conclusion that the council would be dominated by the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP), the TULF would under no circumstances support such a council since the EPDP he said are guilty of large scale election malpractices and violence.

The TULF however would fully support peace talks between the government and the LTTE. This is the only way to end the war, he said, adding that the TULF has always been misunderstood for taking this stand and been accused of supporting the Tamil Tigers.

Appathurai Vinayagamoorthy, Presi-

dent, All Ceylon Tamil Congress reiterated the TULF viewpoint, asserting that there is no point in having an interim council without first holding consultations with the Tigers. "It is the LTTE who should be regarded as the sole representatives of the North and East," he added, saying that the ACTC will not support any moves to establish such a council until the war is ended.

The ACTC leader pointed out that a knowledge of the ground situation in the northeast is proof that minus the participation of the LTTE it is impossible to establish an administrative body in the northeast.

Shipping Minister Rauf Hakeem, the co-leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress was less hostile to the idea of an interim Council. His view was that before establishing an interim council it was important to first consult all political parties represented in parliament and seek a consensus on the issue.

Hakeem maintained that the need for an interim council in the northeast was derived from the fact that the northeast provincial council has not been able to operate and as a result the administration was being done by officials with no political direction. He said the terms for an interim council had been worked out and agreed upon by both the PA and UNP before the draft constitution was presented to parliament.

Hakeem pointed out that ideally an interim council could be established after a cessation of hostilities was in effect. "Otherwise the lives of the members of such a council will be in peril," he noted. Hakeem was of the view that he doubted the LTTE would tolerate other Tamil party members in such a council in the event the rebel group was invited to join the council by the government.

● RADHIKA WINS OSLO HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

Dr. Radhika Coomaraswamy has won the Human Rights prize of the University of Oslo Lisl and Leo Eitingers prize for her contribution on violence against women.

The awards will be presented to her at a special ceremony, scheduled to be held at the universitets gamle festival, the old festival hall, on Tuesday 28 November.

Commenting on the award, Radhika Coomaraswamy said, "These awards are given not to me but, for a cause. The cause is the movement to eradicate vio-

lence against women."

This is the second such award Dr. Coomaraswamy has won this year. In October she received the Bruno Kreisky Foundation Award for Human Rights from Austria which she dedicated to the late Dr. Neelan.

Thiruchelvam who was assassinated in July last year. She is also the recipient of the International Human Rights law award presented by the International Human Rights Law group for outstanding contribution to international human rights, in 1997, Prominent Women in International Law from the American Society of International Law in 1996 and the International Law Award of the American Bar Association in 1995.

Radhika is the director of the International Center for Ethnic studies in Colombo and United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

● REMEMBERING RAMANUJAM

The Sri Lankan government issued a postage stamp to commemorate life and contribution of the late D. Ramanujam recently

The late Mr. Ramanujam was an ex-MP and former Deputy Mayor of the central highland city of Kandy. More importantly, he was also a well known trade unionist both in national and international trade union movement.

Ramanujam, hailing from the tea plantation areas known as the Hill Country died 32 years ago. It is said that it took so long to remember his services to the country by the issue of a commemorative postage stamp in his honour.

It is of significance to note that even before the formation of the Ceylon Indian Congress (later to become Ceylon Workers Congress), Ramanujam pioneered the establishment of a "Sangam", meaning a union, to sponsor the rights of the workers of Indian origin in the Hill country. He then became a Founder member of the CIC.

His services however were not confined to the members of his own community. His wider contribution to society on a non-sectarian basis promoting harmony amidst ethnic diversity resulted in him being elected for many terms to the Kandy Municipal Council. It was his unique contribution that enabled Ramanujam to be elected Deputy Mayor of the Kandy Municipal Council when all other members of the Council, except him belonged to

(continued on next page)

(Continued from page 28)

the Sinhala community. He crowned his political career by being elected as a Member of Parliament for Aluthnuwara in 1947 from a predominantly Sinhala speaking constituency, an achievement unique in Sri Lanka's political history.

What was dearest to Mr. Ramanujam's heart was his abiding commitment to the workers/trade union movement. With his intellectual attainments, his value and worth were automatically recognized in many an international forums. He was a delegate of the CWC to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), an official of the International Confederation of Free Trade Union (ICFTU) for many years culminating in the prestigious appointment as Regional Director, South East Asia of ICFTU, representing ICFTU at most of the meetings of the UN body, ECAFE.

● MISSING PAINTINGS: PREMADASA'S SON-IN-LAW IN CUSTODY

The son-in-law of Sri Lanka's assassinated President Ranasinghe Premadasa has been arrested following a probe into the disappearance of a valuable painting from the official presidential house. A magistrate ordered the detention of Rohan Jayakody, married to Premadasa's daughter, until December 6 after the police held him in connection with the theft of a more than 100-year-old painting.

Police said Jayakody was admitted to a state hospital under tight security after he complained of chest pains and high blood pressure.

Since the assassination of Premadasa on 1 May 1993, there have been allegations of valuables missing from the presidential residence. Two years after Premadasa's death, the new government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga ordered a probe into any such thefts.

The government tabled a report in parliament in 1995 saying that a gem placed near the bedroom of widow Premadasa was missing after she vacated the government bungalow following the slaying of her husband.

While the former president's widow Mrs Hema Premadasa has been keeping low profile in recent times, his son Sajith Premadasa has emerged as a powerful politician in southern Sri Lanka and is presently a Member of Parliament belonging to the opposition United National Party.

Peace through change: the British devolution experience

(Text of the speech by Hon. Peter Hain, Britain's Deputy Foreign Minister, delivered at the British Council in Colombo on 23 November 2000)

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today. This is my first visit to Sri Lanka and it is a good opportunity for me to get to know key opinion formers and to learn about the issues of the day. Everyone I speak to agrees that the top priority on the political and economic agenda is to find a lasting solution to the ethnic conflict. I have followed events in Sri Lanka with considerable interest and sadness, as a friend with a shared history and common values, and a fellow member of the Commonwealth family. It is a tragedy to see so many lives being lost and development opportunities missed as a result of this destructive conflict.

The UK is keen to help in the search for a peaceful settlement to this complex problem if we are asked to do so. But the solution must come from within Sri Lanka if it is to be sustainable. There is no magic wand that people from outside can wave to make things better. So I have not come here with any preconceived ideas on what form a settlement might take; that is a matter for the Government and the people of Sri Lanka.

But others have also experienced internal conflict and have searched for ways of giving different communities a greater say in the governance of their own affairs within a unitary state. I would like to share with you some of the experiences that we have had in the UK, particularly in the context of Northern Ireland. I do this, not because I want to suggest that the formula we have developed in Northern Ireland must necessarily be the right one for the Sri Lankan context; but because we have encountered some of the problems that you face and there may be something of value in that experience which you can draw upon.

Since our Labour Government came to power in 1997, we have devolved power to Scotland and Wales

and, as part of a Peace Process to Northern Ireland as well. Each has a different model of devolution. The Scottish Parliament has fully-fledged legislative powers over most things, excluding foreign and defence policy and social security. The Welsh Assembly has more limited control over key areas like education, health and economic development. The powers of the Northern Ireland Assembly fall midway between those of Scotland and Wales.

Conflicts around the world - for example, in the Middle East, Kashmir, Western Sahara, the Balkans, South Africa, Indonesia and Spain - have some similarities. But each has its own unique history demanding its own unique solution.

Nevertheless we can learn lessons and draw from each others experiences. I would like today to concentrate on how the United Kingdom has worked towards a negotiated settlement in Northern Ireland, following centuries of bitter conflict, horrendous violence, terrorism, discrimination and injustice. We have not yet secured a genuinely lasting peace embraced by all. But we are making significant progress which just a few years ago would have been regarded as impossible. And if Sri Lankans continue to despair about the prospects for peace in their own beautiful island, they can take courage from the fact that the conflict in Northern Ireland goes back much longer and has been at least as bitter and entrenched.

The Principle of Devolution

But first, the principle, of devolution itself. Some ask: will it not ultimately lead to the break up of the nation state?

I firmly believe that it will not. Our devolution arrangements respect the history, culture and tradition of different parts of the United Kingdom. They strengthen not weaken our Union. The arrangement which we have put in place seek to devolve to the constituent parts of the UK the power to manage their own affairs in the areas which

are of most concern to the local populations. At the same time, they reserve for the national government the tasks which are best performed at the national level.

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, recently commented: "Devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, alongside changes under way at regional and local levels in England, have all strengthened the ability of each part of the United Kingdom to find solutions which meet their particular needs while maintaining the integrity of the United Kingdom and respecting the common interest and traditions which bind us all together, wherever we live."

Devolution has required courage, but it is the forging of a new, modern Britain - a strong, multinational, multicultural and multiethnic country, where our strength comes not from uniformity but from diversity; not from a flattening process of programmed assimilation, but from a democratic renewal through mutual tolerance and respect. I believe that devolution, rather than undermining the UK, will actually strengthen it.

I fought apartheid in the old South Africa because I hated racism and I believed in equality, justice, pluralism and the dignity of all ethnic and religious groups. I know that the Sri Lankan people share these beliefs and care deeply about their diverse cultures, languages and traditions. Nelson Mandela's "rainbow nation" vision for South Africa is a vision the British Government shares and we are proud to be a multicultural, multiethnic, multi-faith and indeed multinational state. Devolution is one example of how that vision is put into practice.

I hope devolution will awaken a greater civic interest and encourage people to participate in determining their own local affairs. By recognising and accommodating the diversity that exists in the UK, by allowing its various parts to do things differently, I believe we strengthen the UK. It is this ability to adapt and adjust, to evolve and improve in response to changing circumstances, that has been the hallmark of democracy in Britain. I hope it will be a model, which your island will share.

The Irish Experience

So how did devolution come to Northern Ireland? In 1801 the marriage of Great Britain and Ireland created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Britain's rule was often violent and oppressive. By the second half of the 19th Century, "home rule" (or devolution) for Ireland had become one of the major issues of British politics. From 1886 onwards the Liberal Government made several unsuccessful attempts to legislate for Irish Home Rule.

In the aftermath of the First World War, the British Government finally legislated for Home Rule. However, by then the pressure for a completely independent Irish State was overwhelming and in 1921 the Irish Free State, later to become the Republic of Ireland, was established in the South. However, the six counties of the North were not included; they were left as part of the United Kingdom and were granted their own devolved parliament and government.

These six counties of Northern Ireland were dominated by the majority Protestant community (roughly 60% of the population).

Historically, the Protestants identify closely with Britain and are known as Unionists, as they favour the union between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. The minority Roman Catholic population tend to identify with the independent Republic of Ireland to the south and are known as Nationalists. After 1921 the Nationalists were effectively excluded from power by a Unionist majority which ruled with intolerance, injustice and blatant discrimination against Catholics.

A distinguishing factor of Northern Ireland is its long tradition of violence for political ends. It was against this background of growing violence that the devolved government was suspended in 1972 and direct rule from London put in its place. Civil and human rights were also an important factor 30 years ago at the start of the so-called Troubles. Until reform began in the 1970s Roman Catholics were regularly the victims of discrimination, for example in gaining access to public housing and to jobs in both the private and public sectors.

Throughout the ensuing years, suc-

cessive British governments, both Labour and Conservative, and the main political parties in Northern Ireland have looked for a way to restore a measure of self rule which would ensure the interests and rights of the minority community were fully represented. The history of the negotiations which led to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement is long and complex.

But it is marked by a recognition by successive British - and Irish - Governments, of whatever party, that an enduring solution can only come about if institutions are established which are accepted as legitimate across the whole community. This essentially bipartisan approach over many years, both within the UK and Ireland, and between our two Governments, has been important in achieving success. The Agreement now offers Northern Ireland the best chance of peace in a generation.

The Good Friday Agreement

So what is the Good Friday Agreement?

It deals not only with the political relationships within Northern Ireland, but with Northern Ireland's relationships with the Republic of Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. This took the form of the so-called Three Strand Approach, which is at the heart of the Good Friday Agreement, and as a concept had been around in talks going back at least as far as 1991.

Strand One has produced the involvement of both communities in the devolved Government of Northern Ireland: the sharing of power. The Agreement established an Assembly elected by proportional representation capable of exercising executive and legislative authority with safeguards to protect the rights and interests of all parties within the community.

Strand Two has established structured co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The form agreed includes a Council made up of Ministers from the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Republic of Ireland, plus cross border bodies handling specific subjects with all-Ireland implications.

Strand Three establishes new institutions to handle both bilateral relations between London and Dublin and also a British Irish Council, bringing to-

gether representatives of the British and Irish Governments and the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Underlying the Agreement is the acceptance by all that the people of Northern Ireland are free to choose whether to remain part of the United Kingdom, as a majority clearly want at present, or to become part of an independent united Ireland. Also an acceptance that all parts of the community are free to pursue their differing aspirations, as long as they do so by exclusively peaceful and democratic means.

But the Agreement goes further than simply issues of national identity, the constitutional status of Northern Ireland and political representation, vital though they are.

It is also about Northern Ireland's future being one of fairness, justice and opportunity for all. These elements are particularly important to ordinary people in Northern Ireland, particularly those from the minority nationalist community, who in the past have been denied agreed rights.

The Agreement ensures that the human rights of all sections of the community in Northern Ireland are fully recognised and protected. It is about creating new and inclusive social structures in Northern Ireland to ensure justice, fairness and equality for all sections of the community.

The Main Challenge

So how did we achieve a process which produced this Agreement? How did we manage to negotiate with those speaking for paramilitary groups, most notably the IRA, which had only recently been responsible for horrendous acts of terrorism and assassination? A question perhaps of special interest to Sri Lankans.

The main challenge confronting all the democratic participants in the negotiations was how to involve parties closely associated with terrorist organisations. There was a natural concern about engaging in direct negotiation with political representatives associated with organisations responsible for terrorist campaigns. Some of those who ended up talking across the negotiating table had relatives or neighbours who had died in terrorist attacks.

The approach that we took as a

Government was that those parties had to affirm their total and absolute commitment to exclusively democratic and peaceful means. Ceasefires declared by their paramilitary wings had to be seen to be genuine and lasting. Transgressions from ceasefires led to the suspension of participants from the talks on two occasions.

Deciding when a paramilitary group's ceasefire is genuine and lasting, rather than simply a short term tactic, is probably the hardest judgement confronting any government in initiating a negotiating process of the type we have seen in Northern Ireland. Such paramilitary organisations, by their very nature operate in a political culture difficult to understand from the outside. They naturally tend to be secretive, authoritarian and undemocratic. Nonetheless in the case of Northern Ireland, the paramilitary groups' views were a reflection, albeit an extreme one, of the passionately held views and tensions of a deeply divided society.

There is almost bound to be an element of ambiguity about any halt to violence. But it is essential to tie those who want to give up violence into a position where it is virtually impossible for them to go back.

They need to be locked into a political process which gives them the opportunity to achieve at least part of their objectives. At the same time governments need to be very clear in their own minds about their own basic principles and what their bottom line is. With this firm framework in place, one can then try to be inventive in coming up with initiatives to keep the process moving forward, including for example, over such issues as agreeing to meet with the paramilitaries' political representatives, talks about talks and so on.

Two particular issues almost certain to come up in any peace process of the kind seen in Northern Ireland are paramilitary prisoner release and decommissioning of weapons.

The early release of paramilitary prisoners is always likely to be controversial. But it can form an important part of the process of binding former terrorists into the democratic process. This was a key part of the Good Friday Agreement. Without it, it is unlikely a

broad-based, sustainable settlement could have been achieved.

Decommissioning of weapons is also an integral part of the Good Friday Agreement. The people of Northern Ireland want and deserve reassurance that there is an end to violence for good. Decommissioning has not yet happened, but as a first step the IRA opened some of their arms dumps in June 2000, to two eminent independent, international inspectors, who carried out a second inspection of these dumps in October.

Finally a few thoughts on the actual talks process itself and some of the elements that helped achieve Agreement. Conflict weariness on the part of the paramilitaries after 30 years of conflict, and the acceptance that they could not achieve their aims by violence, was undoubtedly a factor. The strong public yearning for peace has also been crucial, both in encouraging the politicians in their search for a solution and in underpinning the Agreement once reached. This has manifested itself both in the findings of opinion polls but also in the establishment and growth of many non-Governmental voluntary and self-help groups that have worked to bring about reconciliation between the communities, in many cases by devoting their efforts to practical, grass roots projects.

International Involvement

An integral part of the process was the involvement of the international community. A major role was played by various distinguished international figures. Central to success was the participation of former US Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, as Chairman of the Good Friday Agreement negotiations; his co Chairman, ex-head of the Canadian Armed Forces General John de Chastelain; and former Prime Minister of Finland, Harri Holkeri. All played an important, manifestly neutral role in facilitating the negotiations.

Patience, patience, and yet more patience were perhaps the most important of the many qualities Senator Mitchell and his colleagues brought to the process. Senator Mitchell returned to Northern Ireland yet again in the autumn of 1999 to conduct a review of the implementation of the Agreement, which produced the breakthrough al-

lowing for the establishment to the Agreement's various institutions.

General de Chastelain has continued his involvement as Chairman of the Independent International Decommissioning commission, where his two colleagues are a former US diplomat and a senior Finnish army officer with past experience of decommissioning in the Balkans. The Patten Commission on police reform also included 3 international members, each with specific expertise on policing issues, two from the US and one from Canada.

Similarly the Tribunal set up to look into the events of Bloody Sunday in 1972, when 13 civilians were killed during a demonstration in Londonderry, is being conducted by three senior judges, one British one Canadian and one Australian.

This international involvement has helped reassure members of both communities: being seen as having the necessary expertise for the task; and as clearly free of any bias towards one community or the other.

But the commitment and determination of the political leaders of Northern Ireland was probably most important in achieving an Agreement in the end. They showed an extraordinary courage in setting aside the hatreds and violence of 30 years, in which some had been directly involved, to hammer out an agreement. The actual talks process leading to the Good Friday Agreement lasted on and off for over 2 years, although many of the ingredients in the final Agreement had been the subject of negotiations going back several years before this. In the end setting a firm and realistic deadline, in this case Easter 1998, also helped concentrate minds. The high level personal involve-

ment of both the British and Irish Prime Ministers in the final stages, as well as the intervention of President Clinton at crucial moments, was also a key to success.

Compromise and Commitment

It was also essential, and reflected a lesson learned from previous attempts, that all parties understood that nothing was agreed until everything was agreed. This gave parties confidence to explore areas of possible agreement with less fear of compromising on their fundamental objectives. In other words they knew that they would not be left at the end of the process, having made concessions in some areas without getting something in return.

In the end no party got everything they wanted in the Agreement. Compromise was essential in order for it to be achieved. Compromise, co-operation, commitment and courage are all qualities that will be needed if the new institutions established under the Agreement are to work.

The Good Friday Agreement and Northern Ireland devolution are now in business. Society is returning to normal. Positive changes can be seen in the economic climate and in the spirit and hopes of the people. But there are still problems to be solved. More work is needed on all sides to consolidate the gains that have been made. But in the long run I believe Northern Ireland will prove that force can never supplant democracy as the solution to our differences.

Territorial Integrity & Autonomy

Devolution is new to the UK and it is in its infancy. We have made bold and radical changes to the way the UK

is governed. The establishment of devolution has required much effort and continues to challenge us as we adapt to changing circumstances.


If our experience is useful to you, we are more than happy to share it. Sri Lanka has suffered enough from a long and destructive conflict, which has drained the island's material, emotional and moral resources for the past 18 years. No two conflicts are the same: Sri Lanka must find its own solution to its own problem. But I cannot emphasise strongly enough the need for patience and a properly thought out process, which gives all section of the community an opportunity to contribute to the search for peace.

Britain stands ready to help Sri Lanka in any way we can, and remains fully supportive of Norwegian peace facilitation efforts in its dialogue with the Government and the LTTE. I am convinced that both the Government's insistence upon the territorial sovereignty of the whole island, and the LTTE's objective of autonomy, can be secured. But for that to happen the shooting must stop and the talking must start.

This is a war neither side can win militarily. It is a conflict that cannot be resolved without elected leaders being prepared to sit down with people who may well be responsible for barbarous assassinations, but who do have a legitimate political programme which needs to be engaged, not shunned. It took far too long for us to learn that lesson in Britain, and far too many lives were lost as a consequence.

Equally, the LTTE, like the IRA, need to acknowledge that, whilst a Tamil Kingdom constitutionally split from the rest of the island will not receive recognition by Europe, the USA or indeed India, the principle of self-determination and control over most if not all the key policies affecting daily life would be supported by the international community. There is no future for a Sri Lanka paralysed by dogma, intransigence and cruelty. Compromises difficult decisions and tough choices will be needed, some painful.

This is a time for boldness, vision and strong leadership. The Sri Lankan people deserve no less from their leaders, both Sinhalese and Tamil. ●

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International Pressure Mounts in Peace Effort

Colombo Correspondent

The European Union urged the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to talk and work out a negotiated settlement to the ethnic conflict in a statement issued on November 13. The statement added that all countries associated with the European Union and the European Economic Area had aligned themselves with the European Union's declaration. Britain and Australia too had hitched themselves to the band that supports Norwegian facilitation.

Britain is sending its junior foreign minister Peter Hain to Colombo on November 22 to impress on the Sri Lankan government and representatives of all communities the need to settle the ethnic conflict through dialogue. Hain told the London media when he announced his Colombo visit that Britain continues to urge both sides to cease hostilities and seek a long term solution through dialogue in a peaceful climate.

The European Union statement had laid down clearly the parameters within which the negotiated settlement had to be worked out. It said: "The European Union is strongly in favour of these negotiations, which must take substantial account of the aspirations of the Tamil minority while respecting the cultural and religious diversity of Sri Lanka and not undermining the inalienable principle of the territorial integrity and unity of the country."

Hain too told the media that the solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict lies in "addressing the hopes and concerns of all the Tamil people within a united Sri Lanka." While in Colombo he would explain Britain's experience in dealing the Northern Irish problem and launch a programme on community-building and conflict resolution.

Australian envoy in Colombo who visited Batticaloa on November 15 also repeated the same formula to a cross

section of the Tamil people there and expressed his confidence about the success of the Norwegian endeavour.

Safeguarding the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka and satisfying substantially the aspirations of the Tamils had emerged as the refrain of the international community.

Norwegian facilitator, special envoy Erik Solheim, had used exactly the same phraseology during his press conference in Colombo on November 2, the day after his historic meeting with LTTE supremo Velupillai Pirabhakaran at Malavi, Vanni. He said that he had told Pirabhakaran that the solution has to be within the united Sri Lanka. He added that he had made it clear to the LTTE chief who is waging war against the Sri Lankan state for the past 17 years for a separate state called Tamil Eelam that the international community would never accept the division of Sri Lanka. Solheim told Pirabhakaran that the solution would take substantial account of the aspirations of the Tamil people.

Tamil Aspirations

The Norwegian special envoy had told President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga that Pirabhakaran had reacted positively to the internationally community's position, which meant that the LTTE had agreed to abandon its claim for a separate state if a negotiated settlement is worked out. He told the President that the solution should take substantial account of Tamil aspirations.

Neither Solheim nor the European Union spelt out even in general terms the shape and content of the solution should take. They left that to be worked out by the warring parties through negotiations. The matters that need to be sorted out had been clearly identified in the long drawn process of finding a

solution - the nature of the state, the unit of devolution and the extent of the powers to be devolved. They were first recognized in the famously aborted Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact of 1957. In that pact the basic ingredients for the solution were incorporated - elements of federalism, the merged north-east region and devolving powers to it.

The Tamil aspiration since the founding of the Federal Party in 1949 by S. J. V; Chelvanayakam was a federal Sri Lankan state which would ensure the autonomy of the Tamil majority north-eastern region of the country. Tamils had voted overwhelmingly for such a solution in five elections during 1956 to 1970. It was after a definite denial of that aspiration by the 1972 constitution which declared the Sri Lankan state to be unitary Tamils opted to the other alternative of a separate state called Tamil Eelam.

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga announced on 3 August 1995 that Sri Lanka shall be a free, sovereign and independent Republic, being a Union of Regions, and shall be known the Republic of Sri Lanka.

Tamils welcomed it as it tried to meet Tamil aspiration which was to replace the unitary state with a federal structure which would enable them to manage their own affairs.

Tamils were aggrieved with Article 1 of the current 1978 constitution which had declared Sri Lanka a unitary state thus denying their demand for autonomy for the Tamil majority northern and eastern parts of the country. The concerned constitutional provision reads: "Sri Lanka is a Free, Sovereign, Independent and Democratic Socialist Republic and shall be known as the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka." Article 2 declares: The Republic of Sri Lanka is a Unitary State."

Article 1 of the First Working Draft presented to the Parliamentary Select Committee in January 1996 which embodied President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga's August 3 proposals stated: Sri Lanka is a united and sovereign Republic and shall be known as the Republic of Sri Lanka, The Republic of Sri Lanka shall be an indissoluble Union of Regions. The word "indissoluble" was introduced to satisfy Sinhala opposition. The Sinhala criticism was then focused on the use

of the word "united". In response the government in its 1997 October proposals replaced the word "united" with the word "one". Then the proposal read: Sri Lanka is one, Sovereign and Independent Republic, being an indissoluble Union of Regions, and shall be known as the Republic of Sri Lanka.

In these two formulations the federal character of the state was maintained though it was circumscribed in such a way to deny the Tamils their inalienable right of self determination. This was amended further at the behest of the UNP to reintroduce the unitary character. Article 1 of the draft constitutional reform bill presented to Parliament by President Kumaratunga reads: The Republic of Sri Lanka is one, free, sovereign and independent State consisting of the institutions of the Centre and of the Regions which shall exercise power as laid down in the Constitution.

Though it had been argued by constitutional experts that the federal element that the Tamils wanted had been enshrined into the constitution through the recognition of the institutions of the Regions the fact remains that the Sinhala leaders are reluctant to accept an open federal system.

The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) is currently meeting the Colombo-based foreign envoys to brief them about Tamil aspirations; federal structure of the state, merged north - eastern region and extensive powers devolved to the region to enable the people there to govern themselves. TULF leaders R. Sampanthan and Joseph Pararajasingham told the American ambassador that the draft constitution President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga placed before Parliament on October 3 fell far short of meeting Tamil aspirations. The President's August 3, 1995 proposals, they argued, came close to satisfying substantially Tamil aspirations. Those proposals had been progressively whittled down due to the pressures of the Sinhala fundamentalists, the TULF leaders told the American and European envoys.

Two other Tamil groups represented in Parliament, Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) and the All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC) maintain that the draft bill is unaccept-

able because it accorded Buddhism the "foremost place" thus relegating the religions practiced by the minorities to inferior status. In addition the Bill creates the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and makes it mandatory for the government to consult the Supreme Council of Maha Sabgha on the measures taken to protect and foster Buddha Sasana. Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), which had joined the cabinet, wants substantial improvements to be made to the constitution.

In a newspaper interview Sampanthan posed the question: We the moderates have rejected the draft constitution and do you seriously expect the LTTE to accept it?" LTTE had rejected the political solution embodied in the draft constitution and had posed the question in its reverse: The moderates had rejected the draft constitution and do you think that we will accept it?

The Three Alternatives

But the President, in her November 9 Policy Statement, spoke about reviving the constitutional bill she presented to Parliament on 3 October. She appealed to the Members of Parliament, specially that of the UNP, to reconsider the question. She indicated her willingness to discuss it further with the Maha Sangha and other sections of the society.

Credit should be given to the President for diagnosing correctly the ill that afflict the Sri Lankan society. In her 9 November Policy Statement she identified the real cause for the ethnic crisis as the failure of post independence Sri Lanka to build a state structure suitable for a pluralistic society. She said: "The real cause of the ethnic crisis is that the minority communities have not had a fair or reasonable opportunity to share in the political, social and economic power structure in this country. This is now the problem of the system of government now in place in our country. When we built the post colonial state structure we did not think of designing alternate structures which would fit a pluralistic society. We have failed to carry out successfully the responsibility that fifty years of history has thrust upon us, to establish a new, strong and united Sri Lankan nation:"

She argued for the need to find a solution to the present predicament and

promised to look into three aspects- a new constitutional framework, rebuilding the country on the basis of national unity and military action against terrorism.

Theoretically, her identification of the first two facets of the solution to the ethnic problem is admirable. The new constitutional framework should recognize the plurality of the population and create a political structure that would make all citizens genuine shareholders political, social and economic power. Power sharing through, the mechanism of the devolution of power is the only pathway that would lead to such a state structure. The power sharing has to be done with the minority communities, especially the Tamils. The LTTE has to be brought in to make power sharing to work.

"We have by no means closed the door to the LTTE to enter the democratic process of this country. We are ready to have discussions with that organization," President Kumaratunga said.

She said that the JVP that conducted two insurrections had entered the democratic mainstream and some who were involved in the 1971 revolt were in her cabinet. Similarly, a Tamil militant who had entered the democratic mainstream was in her cabinet. LTTE too could do so, the President said.

She said Norway, which is acting as a facilitator, had informed her that certain conditions will have to be met before discussions begin but had not informed her what those conditions are. She said that once those conditions are known she would consult all concerned parties and decide about entering the dialogue with the LTTE. Until then the government would continue the policy of replying terrorism with military action.

The Pitfalls

The President said these three alternatives should be implemented concurrently, together and in co-ordination with each other. But the road to peace is strewn with treacherous potholes and traps. Take for instance the constitutional aspect As mentioned earlier the LTTE would not accept the political structure rejected by the moderate Tamil political parties. It will have to

be something more than what was offered in the constitutional bill.

Indications are that the LTTE would propose a confederation, a model prepared by a London Solicitors on 10 January 1997, where Sri Lanka would be a Union of two states, Sinhala majority state and a Tamil majority state. The Central Council of the Union would act as the channel of communication and coordination between the two States and have powers and functions to deal with foreign affairs, external defence and security, monetary policy, maintenance of common currency and a Central Bank, maintenance of relationship between the states and the broad coordination of their policies and other matters that arise from time to time.

In the alternative the LTTE would propose a federal arrangement. The least that the LTTE could accept is a quasi-federal arrangement. Is President Chandrika Kumaratunga in a position to climb up to meet the LTTE demand?

The question of a ceasefire is more complicated than the devolution question. Pirabhaharan had suggested de-escalation of the war, cessation of aggression and the vacation of occupation and the lifting of the economic embargo as the pre-requisites for talks.

"By deescalation Mr. Pirabhaharan meant the cessation of armed conflict and the removal of military aggression and occupation, the withdrawal of economic embargo and the creation of meaningful negotiations. conditions of normalcy in the Tamil homeland," the LTTE statement said.

It had termed these three actions as pre-requisites for the commencement of any peace negotiations.

However, President Kumaratunga is trying to link these with the progress of the talks on a political settlement. Army chief Lt. General Lionel Balagalle had stated emphatically that ceasefire would come into effect only at the conclusion of the peace negotiations.

Unlike in 1995 President Kumaratunga would not be free to announce a ceasefire without the agreement of the armed forces. In 1995 the service chiefs expressed their discontent at not being consulted before the ceasefire agreement. In future heads of the armed forces would be part of the decision making process concerning ceasefire.

With its experience of 1995 the army would be extremely careful in drafting the conditions for the ceasefire.

Ceasefire is mainly concerned with preventing combatants firing at each other and advancing from the positions they already hold. The army found in 1995 that a ceasefire is advantageous to the LTTE, a militant group, whose cadres can move in civilian garb into army held areas thus threatening their camps and raising their recruitment opportunities. The army would thus resist all moves for a ceasefire till significant advance is achieved on the political solution. Will Pirabhaharan acquiesce to that position?

The Military Option

The peace route, thus, will not be swift and easy. It will be long winding and full of perilous pitfalls. War will continue to rage, perhaps more ferociously and devastatingly for some time. Some analysts predict the war to last till the end of President Kumaratunga's six-year term. They see more and more sophistication of the war as the manpower resources dwindle on both sides.

Both sides have gone high tech and use some of the most modern weaponry. Mig 27's streak across the island nations's skies at twice the speed of sound to drop radar guided bombs and missiles at LTTE targets. The LTTE, which had set up a new Radha Air Defence Unit, is now equipped with surface to air missiles and powerful anti aircraft guns that downed two Russian-built Mi 24 helicopter gunships last month. Air Force fighter jets and helicopters are fitted with electronic systems that emit flares to mislead the heat seeking missiles but are powerless against high caliber guns.

Artillery, multi barrel rocket launchers and mortar launchers are used profusely in the Jaffna battle front. The hand-to-hand battle has given way to long range attacks. And the destruction is heavy. In the battle for Chavakachcheri the entire town was flattened. Intense bombing and shelling carried out by the armed forces in the past week had completely devastated the coconut estate Maniyam Thoddam near Colombothurai jetty. Most of the trees had been broken into two.

As the war climb high tech battle

maneuvers to had been improved.

Since the Elephant Pass battle when the LTTE deprived the army with its fresh water supply by capturing both supply points at Umayalpuram and Palai, LTTE is going for the army's supply routes. They are not attacking directly the military camps which would run the risk of heavy casualty. Supply lines to the three camps - Kilaly, Eluthumadduwal and Nagarkovil are under constant attack by the Tigers. A wounded soldier, Harold Perera, receiving treatment at the Colombo National Hospital said: They start firing motors whenever a lorry brings supplies. We starved for three days before we were evacuated." Perera was a member of the company that manned Eluthumadduwal junction which the rebels wrested after a deadly firefight. Eluthumadduwal was the distribution point for Kilali and Nagarkovil. After the fall of the junction army is using hazardous routes to supply both camps. Kodikamam to the coast and then to Kilali and the old coastal road from Point Pedro to Adliyavah to supply Nagarkovil. Sea Tiger attempt to cut that road north of Nagarkovil on 19 October ended in disaster but they wrested control of Tharavi junction and forced the forces to use a mud track from Ampan to Nagarkovil.

The daring October 23 attack on Trincomalee harbour and the 4 November attack on the naval boats outside the Trinco harbour had enlarged LTTE's maneuver of crippling army's main supply route (MSR). I was a major attack that sent shivers down the spine of the military establishment. LTTE suicide boats had penetrated what was considered the impregnable naval guard. Gunners had assembled big guns outside the harbour and attacked with precision. The newly formed Radha Air Defence Unit had shot down a low flying helicopter Mi 24 gunship. And LTTE had carried away the big guns and the anti-aircraft cannons to safety.

The shaken navy commander Vice Admiral Tissera hurriedly went to Delhi to talk to the Indians and finalize training arrangements for the staff that would man the two Suhanya navacrafts and the helicopters they would carry. Air Force Commander Jayakody flew to Islamabad to solicit Paki-

stan's assistance.

Opposition also to Govern?

While the LTTE through its Trincomalee attack demonstrated its military capacity and capability and through its meeting with the Norwegian facilitator opened the peace front, President Kumaratunga and Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe issued their respective policy statements which revealed their plans to govern the country according to their own priorities and political agenda.

President Kumaratunga, refraining from indulging in her usual attacks on the UNP, appealed to Wickremesinghe and the members of the UNP to place the country's interest first and to help her carry out her three-pronged programme of action - strengthening and guaranteeing human rights to all sections of the society and proceeding towards greater democratization of the government and society; ending the war and bringing about a political solution to the ethnic problem and developing the economy through a definite programme of action. She unveiled a 3-year short term and a 10-year long term plan of action for economic development.

Wickremesinghe claiming that the

people had not provided any political party or a grouping with a governing mandate outlined to the media on November 8 his party's new policy. In a prepared statement which he read he said: The citizens of this country have sent a pointed signal to all political parties that they expect the political parties to work together towards building a new culture. In this context, the role of the national opposition in Parliament cannot be merely limited to the critical examination of the policies and programs of the government. Therefore I, in consultation with all the parties in the opposition would seek to evolve a consensual approach to offer constructive solutions to the problems faced by our people. We will not restrict ourselves to Parliament but will also seek the active participation of the people."

In keeping with this policy, he announced that the UNP would initiate steps to get Parliament to enact legislation to implement the measures stated in its Common Programme - the establishment of Independent Elections Commission, Independent Police Commission, Independent Public Service Commission and Independent Judicial Service Commission. In addition it will take steps to en-

sure the functioning of free media in this country. It declared that the meeting between Pirabharan and Solheim as an important step and urged the government to take swift action to work towards a political solution and a negotiated peace involving the LTTE.

Two days later the UNP leader sang a different tune. He said the President should talk to the TULF, TELO and ACTC in his presence about before talking to the LTTE. The three Tamil parties immediately rejected this proposal, as that would delay the negotiating process. ACTC leader Appathurai Vinayagamoorthy told Wickremesinghe that they saw no need for such a procedure. It was the LTTE that mattered. Wickremesinghe then relented and told Vinayagamoorthy that he would not press his proposal if that were the wish of the Tamil parties.

The government, Agriculture Minister D. M. Jayaratne said, had asked Norway to specify the conditions that need be created for talks to begin. Norway, it looks, is not in a hurry. It is waiting for the international pressure to build up and for Pirabharan's Maweerar Day oration.



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PEACE ENVOY MEETS LTTE LEADER

A Historic Encounter

D B S Jeyaraj

Recent events in the Middle-East are quite troubling. The Oslo brokered, Washington sanctioned accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization that earned for its co-signatories Rabin and Arafat the Nobel Peace prize lies in virtual tatters. Tension continues to escalate threatening a major conflagration in the region. A Unilateral Declaration of Independence by the PLO is very much on the cards. If and when that happens the current scenario would transform drastically. The painstaking mediatory efforts of Norway that paved the way for the Israeli-Arab accord would have failed and the entire project confined to the dustheap of history.

Even as the whole world watches with dismay the near-collapse, in Israel-Palestine, of the peace process crafted by Norway, a recent event in Sri Lanka with a Norwegian dimension has buoyed up optimistic expectations. The event took the country by surprise. It was like the shower of rain that pours suddenly without any of the signs that usually precede it like dark clouds, lightning or thunder. The unannounced visit conducted by a three-member Norwegian delegation to the Sri Lankan northern mainland of Wannai, and its crowning highlight, a two hour meeting with Velupillai Prabhakaran, the leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), was very much like sudden and unpredicted shower as far as the Sri Lankan public was concerned. Except perhaps for a handful of persons with prior knowledge, the whole exercise was a bolt out of the blue, when the LTTE radio "Puligalin Kural" (Voice of Tigers) blared forth to the world on Wednesday November 1st that a meeting between the Tiger supremo and the Norwegians had taken place on that day.

What made the event so unexpected were the contrary signals being sent out constantly by the Sri Lankan government. President Chandrika Kumara-

tunga was as usual blowing hot and cold about peace and war. Her Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake had been delighting the Sinhala ultra right by consistently proclaiming that there would be no talks with the Tigers and that terrorism would be ended through war. The ponderously verbose foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar had in a recent interview on Norwegian TV stated that while the Norwegian peace initiative had not been aborted there was no possibility of peace talks with the LTTE who according to him were not interested in peace.

Replying to a Question. "Does Norway have a role in the peace process?", Kadirgamar answered... "Well we have asked Norway to remain engaged, to remain on board. The president has made that clear, and we have to see what developments take place. At the moment there is no peace process as suchRemember that we want Norway to be available if and when the opportunity arises, and the necessity arises, for a dialogue on peace. Norway is willing to do that and I am very happy about that. But at the moment there are no negotiations going on. I wish to make that clear".

Lakshman Kadirgamar's TV interview to the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation on October 17th 2000 was reproduced at length in the Colombo Sunday Times of October 22nd 2000. All these lofty pronouncements by government figures and the underlying fact that the last election campaign of the Peoples Alliance had been conducted on a pro-war platform made few people anticipate a forward movement on the peace front.

What the Sri Lankan people and perhaps observers of the Sri Lankan scene did not know of course was that intense international pressure was being exerted on Colombo to engage constructively in the search for peace through a negotiated settlement as opposed to the endless war. The angelic

halo of peace around Chandrika that had blinded national and international opinion had lost its lustre over the years. Her so called "war for peace" was now akin to a joke in bad taste. The transnational consortium bankrolling South Asia's longest war was realising that the LTTE could neither be marginalised nor co-opted through this confrontational mode. The need of the hour was a viable and credible peace process. The Norwegian initiative from its inception had had the backing of donor nations. The new relationship emerging between the USA and India was also a crucial factor fuelling the drive for peace in the Island. There was No Way other than Norway for the stalled peace effort to commence again.

This pressure was not on the government alone but also on the LTTE. One factor, but not of course the only factor, that influenced the LTTE's decision to suspend its military push towards Jaffna City was the International environment. There was however nothing much that the International community could do in recent times because of intervening Sri Lankan Parliamentary elections. The Kumaratunga government's customary practice of escalating war to engineer victorious voting patterns was followed this time too as Chavakachcheri was battered through "operation Anvil" during elections. 12,000 shells from newly acquired Multi Barrel Rocket Launchers were directed at Chavakachcheri town and its environs over a period of four days. This was reciprocated by the LTTE who launched "Oyatha Alaigal - 4" (Unceasing Waves - 4) that ruptured the defence line extending from Kilaly to Nagar Kovil through Eluthumattuvaal and placed all three places at peril of being overrun.

After the General elections of October 2000 the International Community came down heavily on both sides. The international effort that is now the Norwegian initiative was revived again. A meeting between the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and the Norwegian Special envoy was set up. The original invitation sent by the LTTE to Norway was before the Elections.

There was no follow up because of the elections. Now Oslo pressurised both Colombo and the LTTE to pursue it. It must be noted that President Chan-

drika Kumaratunga knew very well of the planned Norwegian visit before elections itself. Yet she allowed and perhaps deliberately authorised her Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake to mislead the country by announcing during election time that the Norwegian involvement was over and that it was only war with LTTE in the future.

The Wannu visit by Norway was very necessary at this juncture. It was felt that an imaginative and dramatic maneuver was needed to propel the Norwegian peace mission forward. The routine shuttling of the Norwegians between Oslo, London and Colombo had reached its limits. It was now imperative to touch base with the Wannu too. The time was now ripe for the "vikings" to meet LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran in person. Such a meeting would be very beneficial for the peace process. Ever since Norway had begun playing a facilitator role it had been dealing with LTTE Political adviser Anton Balasingham based in London as the chief interlocutor on behalf of the Tigers. The facilitators were yet to meet Prabhakaran. Although Balasingham had been entrusted the responsibility and authority to act on behalf of the LTTE in discussions a meeting with Prabhakaran was very much desirable.

Firstly it would dispel an erroneous impression that the "elusive" Prabhakaran was not prepared for peace talks and demonstrate that he could and would participate in political dialogue when necessary. Secondly Norway or to be exact its special envoy Erik Solheim could clear any doubt about the commitment of Prabhakaran towards a negotiated settlement. Thirdly Prabhakaran's direct involvement would provide greater credibility to the peace process and also make the LTTE role more visible and accountable.

Fourthly it would create greater symmetry about the level of participants as Kumaratunga had already met the Norwegian delegation several times as opposed to Prabhakaran. Now both the De Jure Sri Lankan President as well as the De Facto "National Leader" of Tamil Eelam according to LTTE supporters, would be jointly involved.

The visit took place in a climate of secretive confidentiality for obvious

reasons. The official invitation extended by the LTTE and its acceptance by Norway was approved and authorised by the Government. Solheim's arrival in Colombo was kept under wraps. A three member delegation comprising Mr. Erik Solheim, Norwegian Ambassador in Colombo Mr. Jon Westborg and an executive officer of the Norwegian Foreign ministry Ms. Kjersti Tromsdal was helicoptered to Vavuniya on Tuesday October 31st. Thereafter they motored to Marudhanamadhu or Madhu. The Norwegians met with some Religious dignitaries and community representatives in Madhu and also visited two refugee camps in the area.

The Norwegian delegation was then met at Madhu by LTTE cadres who took the team to Mallavi via Iranai Illuppaikulam with an International Committee of Red Cross escort. The visitors were accommodated at a well equipped and comfortable guest house run by the LTTE. On Wednesday the delegation held discussions in Mallavi with NGO representatives, Community and Religious leaders and persons doing social work. The highlight of the Mallavi visit was of course with the LTTE Supremo.

There were two meetings. One was with LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran for two hours. The LTTE chief travelled from an undisclosed location in the region for the meeting. LTTE Political Wing head S P Thamilchelvan also accompanied his leader. Another senior Tiger Somalingam alias Shankar was also present to act as interpreter. Shankar who has an aeronautical engineering background is in charge of the LTTE's Anti Air Craft unit named after former Mannar and Jaffna commander Kanagasabapathy Haris Chandran alias Radha. This unit has acquired in recent times an impressive arsenal consisting of state of the art anti aircraft artillery and weapon systems including the radar controlled ZSU - 23 - 4, a four barrelled 23 mm cannon system that has brought down several MI 24 helicopters in the past few weeks.

The second meeting with the Tigers was with some members of the LTTE's political division. The Political Chief Thamilchelvan and deputy chief Karikalan along with a few others participated in this meeting that took nearly three hours. The LTTE Supremo

was not present. This meeting was utilised by the LTTE to present a clear picture to the Norwegians about living conditions in the Wannu. Well compiled dossiers of the trials and tribulations faced by the Tamils of the Wannu because of the embargos and restrictions were presented. This meeting and the other discussions with community, religious and NGO representatives along with first hand observation provided the Norwegians a comprehensive realisation of what life in the Wannu is like in a war situation.

The Meeting with LTTE chief Prabhakaran took place at a special venue constructed by the Tigers for meetings and conferences at Mallavi. In recent times Mallavi has been housing many representatives from Non Governmental Organizations including the Red Cross. Mallavi is more or less the administrative capital of the Wannu. The politico-military capital however would be the place where Prabhakaran is located as according to the famous saying in the Ramayana "Raman Irukku midame Ayothi" (Ayodhya is where Rama is). The Norwegians had to cool their heels for quite a while as Prabhakaran made a late entrance as a security precaution. Worried perhaps that the LTTE leader would disappoint them, the delegates kept on asking Thamilchelvan whether Prabhakaran would turn up. Prabhakaran however kept his word and turned up in the afternoon. The Norwegians were pleasantly surprised to see the legendary freedom fighter dressed in a safari suit. Usually he is clad in military fatigues. The fact that he discarded military for civilian attire was a manifestation of his desire for peace, say his supporters.

The confabulations between the LTTE leader Prabhakaran and the Norwegian delegation was important and useful. The last batch of foreigners met by the LTTE chief was the five member ceasefire monitoring panel that went to Jaffna in January 1995. It comprised one Canadian and two nationals each from Norway and Netherlands. The last Sri Lankan Government emissary whom Prabhakaran met was former UNP minister A C S Hameed in June 1990. The last Indian civilian representatives met by Prabhakaran were former Indian High Commissioner J N Dixit and his Political sec-

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retary Hardeep Singh Puri in September 1987. The last Indian military officials who met Prabhakaran were General Harikirat Singh and Brigadier Fernandez in October 1987. The very fact that Velupillai Prabhakaran was meeting with a foreign delegation was in itself of significance as it illustrated the level of importance attributed to the Norwegian initiative for peace.

Prabhakaran's discussion with the Norwegians was positively refreshing in the sense that he neither ruled out peace talks nor imposed preconditions for resumption of talks. He fully understood and appreciated the Norwegian position that its facilitatory role was within the parameters of ensuring the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka on the one hand and realising legitimate Tamil aspirations on the other. The LTTE leader emphasised that he was not averse to a peaceful settlement if it was possible. The settlement had to satisfy the basic aspirations of the Tamil people. It had to be just, equitable and durable. He pointed out that so far the Sinhala polity had failed to come out with an offer that could meet these requirements. Nevertheless the LTTE was always ready to explore possibilities of seeking a negotiated settlement to the conflict.

Having said this the LTTE leader spoke frankly and openly about his past experiences with the Kumaratunga regime. He spoke of the causes that led to the collapse of previous talks. (Presumably the Norwegians had read the recent book written by Anton Balasingham that outlined and documented from an LTTE perspective the reasons that led to its failure) Prabhakaran then pointed out two factors that were obstructing a resumption of peace dialogue. The first was on a personal level the "animus" displayed by President Kumaratunga towards the LTTE and inconsistency and obduracy on issues related to war and peace. The second was the absence of a congenial atmosphere for peace talks. Normalcy in the Tamil regions had to be ushered in, said Prabhakaran.

It was necessary to create a climate conducive for talks to resume. Confidence building measures should be enacted and an environment of mutual trust established. For this normalcy should prevail in the North and East.

The war had to deescalate. The embargo on food, medicine etc. had to be removed. Restrictions on fishing, agriculture, transport and trade abolished. Troops had to be relocated and camps in schools, places of worship, hospitals and public buildings closed down. Gradually a cessation of hostilities had to occur. Prabhakaran did not impose these as preconditions. Yet normalcy was a prerequisite for meaningful talks to take place.

In spite of the underlying intransigence in this stated position the LTTE leader was flexible. He was ready to usher in this normalcy through a staggered approach. The war could be deescalated through a piecemeal approach. It was up to the government to extend the hand of friendship first. Thereafter each positive step of the government would be reciprocated by the LTTE. This would be a mutually reinforcing confidence building measure. If this approach progresses it could ultimately lead to a cessation of hostilities. In that context modalities regarding talks could be evolved and followed.

Having impressed upon the Norwegian delegation the practical feasibility of his approach, the LTTE leader discussed a variety of possibilities with the Norwegians that would help initiate a viable peace process. The discussions hinged about how the initial phases could come about and what measures could be taken by the different parties to build an atmosphere of trust that would make peace talks possible in the near future. Another point stated but not stressed by the LTTE leader was the necessity to include the UNP also at an appropriate stage in the peace process. This was imperative in the context of the Island's past political history he said. The LTTE is prepared to co-operate in a Norway facilitated peace process through a series of staggered phases. The priority and extent of these phases was something that could evolve only after the Norwegians meet with President Kumaratunga.

The Norwegian special envoy has no illusions about peace being imminent. At the same time he seemed enthused about the LTTE approach. As Solheim told a press conference "It could be in weeks or it could be in years. Nobody can expect a quick fix

or an immediate solution..... We believe that the LTTE are serious and interested in solving the problem through negotiations but we know that it is going to be difficult... This is a confidence-building exercise and no one can expect quick fixes. We have made it clear to the LTTE that we want the problem to be sorted out in a peaceful manner..... We also told them the stand of the International community which is that a solution has to be found by keeping the integrity of Sri Lanka and also keeping in mind the aspirations of the Tamil People..... He did not set any preconditions we consider Mr. Prabhakaran as serious and dedicated to a negotiated settlement...."

After staging a press conference Soheim met with President Kumaratunga and Foreign Minister Kadirgamar and briefed them about his meeting with Prabhakaran. He also met the new Indian High Commissioner in Colombo, Gopal Gandhi, a grandson of both the Mahatma and Rajaji. Soheim also briefed the UNP leader Ranil Wickremasinghe by telephone. By weekend the Norwegians were back in Oslo after a stopover in London for a consultative session with Anton Balasingham. Meanwhile Gopal Gandhi rushed to New Delhi for consultations. Thereafter Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee telephoned Kumaratunga to discuss matters including the Norwegian trip and also invited Kumaratunga for a visit to India which she accepted.

Political convulsions erupted in Colombo in the aftermath of the visit. The Prime Minister Wickremnayake stated publicly that he was not informed of the visit and insinuated that the Norwegians were acting independent of Colombo. He was corrected by a special press release from the Presidential secretariat that the visit was undertaken with the full knowledge and approval of the President. A furious Wickremnayake sought and obtained an appointment with Kumaratunga where he remonstrated for being kept in the dark and also for looking foolish in the eyes of the nation as he had proclaimed earlier that the Norwegian initiative was over. Kumaratunga was her customary charming self and smoothed Wickremnayake's ruffled feelings. One does not know what the Prime Minister's position on the issue is now but it

was apparent that after the one to one meeting with the President, he had become "silent" for a while.

National and international newspapers commented that the Norwegian visit had placed Colombo in a fix. It was no longer possible to evade the issue of negotiations with the bland assertion that the LTTE was not willing. The implicit position of Norway was that the ball was now in the Government court. A bleeding nation needed peace desperately. The resumption of the Norwegian peace initiative and the boost it received through the visit to the Wannu was considerable. The flexibility displayed by Prabhakaran should be appreciated and reciprocated. It was suggested that a meaningful concessionary step like for example the lifting of the food embargo could be taken. This would result in another conciliatory act by the LTTE. Thus a series of confidence building measures could be enacted and the war deescalated. When normalcy prevails a congenial atmosphere conducive to a cessation of hostilities would emerge. Then meaningful negotiations could commence.

All this of course is possible only if a bold and positive step was taken by President Kumaratunga. The United National Party appealed to the Government to act fast and utilise the opportunity. The multi crore rupee question as to whether she would take it was answered in the negative within a few days. Kumaratunga revealed her position when she addressed Parliament on November 9th. After reiterating that her government was not averse to peace talks and that the "door to peace had not been shut" the President then adopted a somewhat negative approach. In spite of her talks with the Norwegian delegation on November 3rd Kumaratunga maintained that she was unclear about the conditions under which talks were to be held. Clarification and amplification had been sought from Oslo. Until it was clear that the conditions were acceptable the war would continue. Also an interim admin-

istration would be set up in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. She also stated that it was the majority Sinhala people who had suffered most because of the war.

Even before Kumaratunga, the Army chief General Lionel Balagalle stated openly to the press that the only solution for the crisis was to defeat the LTTE militarily. The Tigers needed a military solution while the Tamil people required a political one. There would be no ceasefire because past history had demonstrated that the LTTE refurbished itself during such times. The Prime Minister also went public saying that the LTTE had to give up arms and enter the political mainstream like the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and Eelam Peoples Democratic Party. All this showed that a ceasefire and talks were not possible immediately.

The Sinhala neo fascist elements who were routed conclusively at the polls also began raising their heads. Demonstrations including some opposite the Norwegian Embassy were staged in protest. They demanded Norway to cease its mediatory efforts and quit the country if necessary. The JVP now plugging a "communalist" line also held protests. Even though protests are allowed in a country claiming to be democratic, it is perplexing to see demonstrations being staged in the vicinity of the Norwegian mission. After all the Government is required to stand up for Norway as it is engaged in facilitatory efforts only at the invitation and approval of the Kumaratunga regime.

In spite of her declarations to the contrary the current reality is that Kumaratunga is constrained by the pro-war platform on which she was reelected in December 1999 and the Peoples Alliance adopted during Parliamentary elections. One reason for the Sinhala neo fascists failing to gain enough votes was because they voted in large numbers for the PA. The PA government has several Sinhala hardliners including Prime Minister Wickremnayake, and ministers Mah-

inda Rajapakse, Anuruddha Ratwatte and Dinesh Gunewardene. The latter and his racist Mahajana Eksath Peramuna are now the prized jewels in the PA crown. Apart from pressures within PA ranks there is the Army factor too. It would not be amenable to any lull in the military enterprise because it would demoralise the rank and file. Then there is the Sinhala Buddhist Ultra Right comprising powerful sections of the Clergy along with the neo fascist lunatic fringe elements. There is also the well entrenched Arms lobby that is dictating the war effort now. There is also the Indian factor. New Delhi may not approve of talks with the Tigers despite denials to the contrary. Some Indian newspapers said that India was concerned about a face to face meeting between Kumaratunga and Prabhakaran.

Even if Kumaratunga is prepared to transcend all these barriers there is also the highly subjective personal factor. After her experiences, Kumaratunga does not trust the LTTE at all. Unless and until she is sure of the Tiger bonafides she would hesitate to move forward on this. Under these circumstances there seems very little likelihood of a sensational breakthrough on the peace front immediately although the historical importance of the Norwegian meeting with LTTE leader Prabhakaran cannot be minimised. If any positive forward movement is to occur it can only be if the International Consortium backing Norway's role exerts tremendous pressure again. The British Deputy Foreign ministers trip to Colombo is a pointer in this respect. Meanwhile two other events will be eagerly awaited before the peace process gets moving. One is the annual Great Heroes Day address by LTTE leader Prabhakaran where he is expected to outline his position on the talks. The second is the outcome of Kumaratunga's anticipated visit to India. Until then there seems to be no way forward to peace with or without Norway.



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A "National Government" or a "Nationalist Government"?

Dr. S Narapalasingam

The idea of a "national government" when a country and its people face a grave crisis is not only a welcome one, but can be said to be absolutely essential for their survival. Sri Lanka has been in turmoil for nearly two decades because of the unresolved ethnic conflict that has led to an internal civil war threatening its territorial integrity in the context of secessionist demand for a separate state of Tamil Eelam.

Over the years, there have been calls by concerned individuals and sections, both within and outside the country, that the political parties and leaders should treat and deal with the ethnic conflict as a "national issue" avoiding partisan or sectarian considerations. However, very rarely has there been a call to form a "national government" in which the two major political parties in the country have been urged to become partners.

In recent weeks one has witnessed a strident demand from certain quarters urging the formation of a "national government". It is essential to note and understand the circumstances in which this demand is made, and the motives behind it.

Sri Lanka is a pluralist society in ethnic and religious terms. The Sinhalese constitute the predominant majority comprising over 70 percent of the population, and by and large they are Buddhists. The minority communities are the Tamils, who by and large profess Hinduism, comprising approximately 18 percent and the Muslims approximately 7 percent.

The support base of the two main political formations in the country which have alternatively ruled the country since independence in 1948 have, particularly after the ethnicisation of the political process, been the Sinhalese-Buddhist population. Depending on the numerical Sinhala-Buddhist majority to win elections and assume political power, these parties were tempted to contest each other as to which between them was the more ardent "champions of the Sinhala-Buddhists", and thereby forfeited their right to be regarded as "national parties" representing all the different ethnic communities in the island. The political parties representing the Tamil and Muslim minorities began to regard these main two

parties as "Sinhala political parties".

For a time, the use of the "Sinhala-Buddhist" card enabled one or the other of the main "Sinhala parties" to obtain an overall majority following elections to assume power. However, in recent years, the rivalry between them, divided the "Sinhala-Buddhist" electorate almost into equal halves leading to a situation in which both these parties had to obtain the support of the political parties representing the minority Tamils and Muslims to be able to form governments. The inability of both these parties, the PA and the UNP, to form governments without support from parties representing the minority communities has become more evident in recent years. The PA following the August 1994 general election was able to form a reasonably stable administration only with the support of the minority parties - TULF, CWC, SLMC - in parliament.

Following the recent general elections in which neither of the two major political parties obtained an overall majority to be able to form a government, both parties sought the support of the parties representing the minority communities to forge a majority in parliament to be able to form a government. For securing their support, the demands of the minority parties, including a share in cabinet portfolios, had to be met. While the United National Party (UNP) with less number of seats failed in its endeavour, the Peoples Alliance (PA) succeeded in obtaining the support of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) and the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP) and thereby forge a majority in parliament and hence form the government.

Of necessity the UNP and the PA have become accustomed to the political reality of having to depend on the minority parties. However, there are powerful and influential sections within the "Sinhala-Buddhist" spectrum that detest this development and refuse to come to terms with it. They regard that the PA and the UNP as having, by their dependence on the support of minority parties, betrayed the cause of the Sinhala-Buddhists by succumbing to what they consider as unreasonable demands of the mi-

nority parties. Therefore, these forces entered the last election fray mainly under the banner of the newly formed Sinhala Urumaya in the fond hope that they would be supported by the "Sinhala-Buddhist" electorate at least to the extent that they themselves would hold the balance of power to be able to dictate terms to both the PA and the UNP following the election. The results completely shattered their expectations. They just managed to secure only a derisory 1.5 percent of the votes cast in the whole country. They were resoundingly rejected by the Sinhala-Buddhists who constitute the overwhelming majority of the electorate. However, these forces have not given up and have become active in promoting the formation of a "national government" by the two main parties, the PA and the UNP. Their primary motive is the marginalisation of the parties representing the minority communities.

Some sections of the Maha Sangha want a national government to keep out the Muslim and Tamil minority parties being part of the government. Their motive was evident when the Mahanayake of the Asgiriya Chapter Ven. Udugama Buddha Rakkitha Thera told the visiting Minister, Lakshman Kiriella, that if the PA and the UNP did not form a national government, both would have to dance to the tune of the minorities!

Well meaning intentions

Of course there are other sections in Sri Lankan society that are urging the installation of a national government that are genuinely motivated by well meaning intentions.

The Joint Forum of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Employers' Organisations and Trade Associations of Sri Lanka carried full-page advertisements in all national newspapers (October 21) calling for "a bipartisan approach to form a government of national unity and reconciliation." It said: "The focus today must be on building our nation."

The leaders of the major trade and commerce chambers and the business community are obviously very concerned about the fall in share prices and the loss of confidence in the market, the sharp fall in the country's foreign reserves, the widening trade gap, the loss of confidence of investors and the slow growth of agriculture and manufacturing industries. They are eager to improve quickly the present adverse climate for both foreign and domestic investment and put the country on the market-oriented high growth track.

Anyone following the economic and financial trends in Sri Lanka will natu-

rally be concerned about the country's future, particularly in the context of the developments taking place in the world and the vast opportunities available to improve the well-being of the country. According to published figures, there has been a net outflow of 38 million US Dollars in the first nine months of this year compared to an outflow of only about 6 million Dollars in the corresponding period of last year. The CSE all share index has plummeted to around 500 from 986 in 1994 (year-end). Some Stock Exchange brokers think that a rapprochement between the two main political parties must take place immediately even without any changes to the economic fundamentals to revive the market.

The consumers and housewives think that the formation of a PA-UNP national government will result in the fall in the cost of living, which has risen to unbearable levels particularly for the vulnerable segments of the society living on meagre incomes. "The Island" paper of October 27 reported, "several consumers were of the view that the setting up of a National Government to end the war may be the only way out to arrest the sky rocketing COL (cost of living)." President of the Housewives Association also expressed the hope that "the UNP and the PA will get together and do something, by setting up a national government. Then they may

be able to give the housewives some relief." The statement issued by the Organisation of Professional Associations (OPA) suggesting the formation of National Government appears to be intended as a way to bypass the "Party system" that in Sri Lanka's case has been a major obstacle to the country's progress.

It is not so much the system but the leaders by their opportunist conduct who have harmed the country immensely over the past several years. There is considerable doubt whether this theoretical suggestion is useful at the present time. There is also the view seen from various articles published recently in the national papers, that the country needs a strong government now and this can only come from a PA-UNP national government. The implied assumption is that the leaders in a national government will be more national minded than when they are in opposite sides! Nevertheless, all these views convey the anxiety of different sections of the society looking for ways to escape from the present dire straits that are distressing them.

In an open letter to the political leaders, Colombo's Archbishop Rt. Revd. Dr. Nicholas Marcus Fernando has stated: "A coalition of the two major parties only is not what is called for to solve the country's problems. Such a coalition could easily forget or ignore

the larger issue of ethnic peace. That would be another big mistake we will be making by opportunistic decisions. All that has been attempted so far to bring about ethnic and national unity through justice in a new Constitution will be lost if we follow that path. What should not be forgotten even for a moment is that it is not a coalition of the two major parties that is going to solve the country's problems but a new system of government that would always be a grand coalition of all parties after every election according to the votes won from the people. It is an extension of the concept of Proportional Representation extended to the Cabinet as well. In a multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-religious country like ours, while graciously respecting history and tradition and their values, the best form of government would be one of co-operation rather than of contestation".

Hopefully, the Archbishop's message will influence the political leaders to act wisely and sincerely in the larger interest of all the people and the country. The call for co-operation is also addressed to all leaders including the minorities. Lasting peace cannot be achieved through confrontation and/or violence. This must be clear even to the extremists on both sides of the ethnic divide after the tragic happenings over the past two decades with no early end to the conflict in sight.

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My dear Periya Annah,

You seem to be unnecessarily worried about our safety. We have got used to the war environment. In fact, I can sleep soundly when the army and the LTTE engage themselves in their regular artillery duel. The distant roar of explosions shakes me to deeper slumber.

Things are unusually quiet since the beginning of this month. May be because of the historic talks Norwegian facilitator Erik Solheim had with LTTE leader Velupillai Pirabakaran in Mallavi on November 1 evening. People here are delighted about that meeting. They are also happy that President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga had responded positively.

That doesn't mean that peace will dawn soon. The JVP and Sinhala chauvinists are bracing themselves to dispute Norway's peace effort. JVP had dubbed Norwegians "ugly" and charged them of acting as the spokesman for the LTTE. Sinhala Urumaya, the bastion of Sinhala-Buddhist fundamentalism - the Taliban of Sri Lanka - had demanded the Norwegians to quit Sri Lanka. I wonder whether the Kumaratunga government has the capacity to withstand the combined pressure of the Marxist militants and Sinhala-Buddhist extremists. Some say that the government had already paved the ground to abandon the Norwegians. How else to interpret the leak of the information that it had proposed France to be the facilitator but the LTTE had insisted on Norway?

Here in Jaffna on the same November 1 morning another event of great significance occurred. At 10.30 am a representative cross-section of the people of Jaffna - journalists, religious dignitaries, politicians, social workers, trade unionists, government servants and teachers, among others, gathered at the Jaffna bus stand and observed two minutes silence in memory of the slain journalist Mylvaganam Nimalarajan. They covered their mouths with black cloth and placed their pens on a table before them. And during those two momentous minutes teachers, students, journalists, writers, government servants and all others who use either pens or pencils laid them down on their tables and stood up in silence. This innovative mass protest signified the abhorrence of the public to the growing gun culture and the physical elimination of dissent.

The ground-breaking protest was North Sri Lanka Journalists Association's response to the cold-blooded killing of the popular journalist Nimalarajan, the

Letter from Jaffna

lonely voice that boldly proclaimed to the world the plight of the Jaffna people. Educated in Colombo the young and bold Nimalarajan spoke and wrote fluently in Tamil and Sinhala and contributed to several newspapers and radio. His gunning had evoked widespread protests in Jaffna and the rest of Sri Lanka.

He was killed on October 19; the very night the cabinet of ministers took oath in Colombo. Nimalarajan was in his room writing an article for a Colombo newspaper. His father Mylvaganam was listening to the 9.45 pm BBC Tamil Osai broadcast to which his son contributed. His wife was in another room putting the children to bed. His mother was in the toilet. Mylvaganam told the Jaffna Magistrate E.T. Vignarajah, who held the inquest, that it was dark at the time of the assassination. Electricity had failed. Some outsiders had entered the house. One went up to him, held him by the head, bent him down and started cutting his neck.

"They are cutting my neck. They are cutting my neck," he shouted. Another person shot Nimalarajan and flung a hand grenade into the house. Mrs. Mylvaganam described that scene to the Magistrate, "I heard my husband shout. I ran towards the place he sat. Then there were gunshots followed by a loud explosion. Something struck me and I fell down. Then I got up and ran to my son's room. He was in a pool of blood."

The neighbours took the victims to the hospital. There, Nimalarajan was pronounced dead. His voice had been stilled.

The finger was pointed towards the EPDP. Nimalarajan had exposed relentlessly EPDP's activities, the latest was its election malpractices. The Free Media Movement and the Sinhala weekly Ravaya went a little further and accused EPDP as the perpetrator of that dastardly crime.

EPDP leader Douglas Devananda answered the accusers in an interview to the Tamil newspaper Thinakkural. He said the reference to the EPDP was oblique and added similar unfounded accusations had been made in the past too; when a former army commander of Jaffna Denzil Kobbekadduwa was killed in an explosion.

He then said: The newspaper world had forgotten the other side of Nimalarajan. People know very well that he was an LTTE agent in the journalist garb."

He accused Nimalarajan of having a hand in the killing of former Jaffna mayor Sarojini Yogeswaran, the Jaffna Traders Association president Na-

masivayagam, 10 EPDP local council members and others. It was Nimalarajan, he added, through whom LTTE's former Jaffna District Jaffna Organizer Thuyavan informed an injured Tiger cadre to commit suicide by consuming cyanide.

He also referred to the questioning of Nimalarajan by the police about the photographs of the candidates who contested the parliamentary election in the Jaffna district which were found in the parcel abandoned by an LTTE suspect who escaped arrest. The police suspected him of providing the LTTE with those photographs, Devananda charged.

Two unsigned leaflets, one in Tamil and the other in Sinhala, containing all these points, are currently being circulated in Jaffna.

EPDP was also mentioned two other murders. The first was the murder of Arunthavachelvam on October 22 at Inuvil due to a private dispute between an EPDP member and the victim. The other was the gunning down of Thavarajah of Karaveddi who had rented the market against the wishes of a former chairman of Vadamarachchi South Padesha Sabha. The suspect who had been arrested was sacked by the EPDP for irregularities and had contested the recent parliamentary polls from Varatharaja Perumal. s EPRLF.

November 1 "Pen and Pencil Protest" was also backed by the Jaffna University Student's Association which aroused the suspicion of the army. Since the 1998 arrest of student leaders Nandaseelan and Sutharsan the army was suspicious of the University Students-LTTE connection. But the army had to release them and work out an arrangement with the university authorities following a peninsula-wide student protests. Since then they had honoured the arrangement and had informed the university authorities when they question or arrest any university student.

Of late suspicions of the army had heightened. In April university students led a public agitation when the army prevented civilians from leaving Palai and its environs when the LTTE advanced towards the Elephant Pass. The army was thus forced to permit the migration of civilians to safer areas. This helped the LTTE to step up its attack and capture the Elephant Pass Camp. Army officers charge that the university students acted in collusion with the LTTE and the agitation was intended to help the LTTE to

capture of the Elephant Pass camp.

Army's suspicion further intensified during the October 10 parliamentary election when the leaflet issued by the Sanghilian Padai was prominently pasted inside the university premises and the surrounding areas. The statement issued by the University Student's Association calling for a boycott of the polls also aroused army suspicion.

On October 31 Women Police raided the Ananda Coomarasamy Women's Hostel and conducted a through search of all the rooms. The search was done in the presence of lecturers and instructors. A senior Arts male student was grilled for over two hours in the presence of the vice chancellor about his connections with the LTTE. Later his room at the Balasingham Hostel was exhaustively searched.

These acts of harassment were intended to scare the university students from organizing and participating in popular human rights agitations. University students are made of sterner stuff. They cannot be frightened away so easily. A disturbing news has come from Amban where the notorious white van had kidnapped three young men a few days ago.

Meanwhile, the armed forces are strengthening the defences to thwart any LTTE onslaught anticipated before the Maweerar Day on November 27. Pirabakaran's Maweerar Day speech is awaited with great anticipation. Now that he is in a position of strength will he launch a Peace Crusade?

We were happy to hear that a peace envoy from Norway had visited Wannu and met Pirabakaran who has agreed to begin talks with the government. Do you think, at least this time round the talks if they take place will lead to peace? We have been disappointed many times before. All say they wish the war to end and for peace to return. They even say that they are concerned about the sufferings of the ordinary people. We here in Jaffna, who have only seen and suffered the ravages of war for many many years now do not believe any one of them. But we all hope and pray for the return of peace. Then at least some of our people who enjoy life abroad in happier surroundings can visit us and see first hand what we have been going through. By the way, thank you very much for the fifty pounds you sent me. Please do not get upset if I say that many of us here feel belittled when we have to depend on handouts from abroad for our survival. But for others who have no relatives resident abroad, survival itself is a big struggle. Your Loving brother
Anthony

Sirima Bandaranaike (1916-2000) World's First Woman Prime Minister

John Rettie

"What does she know of politics?" scornfully asked a cousin of the assassinated prime minister of Ceylon, Solomon "Solla" Bandaranaike, when his widow Sirima announced that she was taking over his party's leadership in 1960.

"In Solla's time, Sirima presided over nothing fiercer than the kitchen fire," continued Paul Pieris Deriyangala, who had been best man at the Bandaranaike's wedding. "She'll end by spoiling her personal reputation and ruining the family name."

Few forecasts have proved so mistaken. Thanks to Sirima Bandaranaike, who has died of a heart attack aged 84, even more than to her husband, the name of Bandaranaike became a legend. She not only became the world's first woman prime minister, but went on to head her country's government three times. She altered the face of Ceylon, in many ways controversially, made it a republic, and changed its name to Sri Lanka.

More than that, Mrs Bandaranaike became one of the third world's best-known leaders, rubbing shoulders with Indira Gandhi, Chou en-Lai, Marshal Tito and others in the heyday of the non-aligned movement. A cauldron far, indeed, from the kitchen fire, and, at home at least, much fiercer.

Yasmine Gooneratne, another cousin within the vast Bandaranaike clan, who recounted "Uncle Paulie's" scathing comments in her family memoirs, *Relative Merits*, describes "Aunt Sirima" as "the most formidable and charismatic leader the country has ever seen". And in the words of Maureen Seneviratne, her biographer: "If Mr Bandaranaike's stature as a politician and leader was built up over decades of campaigning, Sirimavo (the suffix 'vo' denotes respect) donned hers like a cloak that had been lying in her wardrobe for years, unworn, but which had been pressed and kept ready for wearing at any given moment."

Sirima Bandaranaike was born Sirima Ratwatte, the daughter of a prominent Sinhalese family in the Kandyan hill country of Ceylon - a perfect match for the wealthy, low-country family of her future husband, with his driving political ambition. Like many similar families, the Bandaranaike were thoroughly anglicised, and held prominent positions in the British colonial regime then in charge of the country.

Although many leading Kandyan families also served the government and adopted English first names, most remained staunchly Buddhist, and preserved Sinhalese traditions. Sirima's was just such a clan. Her father, Barnes

Ratwatte (named, like her husband-to-be, after a British governor-general), was seen as an excellent match for her mother, herself the daughter of one of the best-known Kandyan chieftain families.

Wanting the best education - which had to be English - for Sirima, the eldest of six children, her parents sent her, at the age of eight, to a convent boarding school in the capital, Colombo. But they ensured that she remained a devout Buddhist, speaking Sinhala as fluently as English. After leaving school, she threw herself into social welfare work, walking miles through jungles and over mountains to distribute food and medicines, organise clinics and develop village industries. She became a great favourite of the Sinhalese peasantry, acquiring a reputation that was to prove invaluable to both her husband and herself.

Her marriage, in 1940, to Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike, then a brilliant young, Oxford-educated colonial government minister, was dubbed "the wedding of the century". Both were from the top goyigama caste of landowners, and their horoscopes were found to match perfectly. And if he did not know the rural Sinhalese as she did, Bandaranaike instinctively sensed their needs and aspirations.

Unfortunately, neither knew anything about the country's Tamil minority, its language and culture or needs and aspirations. It was an omission that often led the couple to ignore the Tamils, or make fatal blunders in dealing with them.

At first, Sirima's public role was that of a dutiful wife. Her eldest child, Sunethra, was born in 1943, followed by Chandrika, and finally a boy, Anura. But in 1948, as the island of Ceylon edged towards independence, the shy, methodical wife and mother found her home invaded at all hours by her mercurial husband's friends, forever discussing politics and demanding refreshment.

Throughout their married life, according to James Manor's biography of Bandaranaike, *The Expedient Utopian*, her main difficulty was her husband's male chauvinism. Manor cites a possibly apocryphal, but indicative, story about a delay in tea being served at a political gathering in their Colombo house, to the host's irritation. When it appeared at last, and his wife retired to the kitchen, he shouted: "Sirima! These gentlemen drink tea with sugar. For the sugar to get into the cup, there must be some instrument. You have not put a spoon in the sugar bowl."

Manor's account continues: "The dutiful wife went to fetch a spoon, and Mr Bandaranaike quipped: 'We have to think for them too.'" She made no complaint. No wonder the men failed

to foresee what a forceful leader she would be – "perhaps too forceful", Manor adds drily.

Nonetheless, Sirima soon became Bandaranaike's valued confidante. It was she who persuaded him to resign from the government and the ruling United National Party (UNP) in 1951. She had long been aware of his exasperation at the social and political immobility since independence. Two months later, he formed the Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP), with democratic socialism and Sinhalese resurgence at its heart, setting the party political battle lines in the country for the rest of the century.

General elections the following year brought Sirima her first baptism of political fire, as she campaigned on her husband's behalf in his constituency, while he carried his new party's message to the rest of what was still Ceylon. Her reward was the biggest majority for him of any candidate, though the SLFP won only nine seats.

At the next elections, in 1956, Bandaranaike won by a landslide and formed a leftwing coalition. The key factor in his victory was the "Sinhala only" policy - the promise to replace English with Sinhala as the island's sole official language, and a watershed policy in Ceylonese history. It was aimed at the dominance of the English-speaking elite, but, in fact, sowed the seeds of bitter conflicts with the Tamils. Bandaranaike used Sinhalese chauvinism to gain power, but found he could not control it. And though the influential Buddhist monk who planned his murder in 1959 was motivated primarily by personal grievances, this chauvinism played a part in it.

For Mrs Bandaranaike, her husband's death was a traumatic tragedy. One morning, she was in the garden of their house, always open to visitors, when she heard a commotion inside. She rushed indoors to find him collapsing, gravely wounded, with a Buddhist monk pointing a gun at him. She courageously flung herself at the gunman, who was then felled by police fire, but Bandaranaike died in hospital the next day.

Sirima was given little time to grieve in peace. The following year, she succumbed to the SLFP's desperate pleas to assume the party leadership, and led it to victory on a wave of public sympathy. The world's first woman prime minister took office in triumph.

In the next four years, she forged ahead with the socialist reform programme her husband had initiated - and, indeed, went further. The island was thrust full-tilt into the emerging non-aligned movement; foreign oil companies were nationalised, and all government business was transferred to the state-owned Bank of Ceylon and the new People's Bank, bringing an end to American aid; Soviet aid was sought for industrialisation projects; and education was reformed in favour of the Buddhist Sinhalese.

But Mrs Bandaranaike paid a high price. At the end of 1964, under pressure from right-wing Buddhist leaders, some SLFP MPs crossed the floor, and the government collapsed. Sirima lost the next year's elections, but was herself elected to parliament for the first time.

Five years on came sweet revenge. In 1970, the United Left Front, led by the SLFP, won a two-thirds majority in parliament, and the socialist

bandwagon set off again at full speed - although not fast enough for the militant and disaffected youths of the extreme leftwing People's Liberation Front, the JVP.

Having benefited from Mrs Bandaranaike's educational reforms, they found there were still no jobs for them, so, in 1971, they launched an insurrection. It was swiftly crushed, though at the cost of an estimated 1,000 young lives. More than 10,000 were jailed, although most were later released.

Deeply shaken, the government pressed on hurriedly with land reform, nationalisation of the tea estates and a new republican constitution, which changed Ceylon's name to Sri Lanka and made Buddhism the state religion - to the dismay of the mainly Hindu Tamils.

Mrs Bandaranaike also imposed rigid state control over the economy, which had the now familiar consequences. Under the impact of soaring oil prices, living standards collapsed in a welter of rationing, bureaucracy and corruption. As a result, her SLFP was routed in the 1977 elections, winning a derisory eight seats. The UNP, led by Julius Jayawardene, secured a 75% majority, which he used ruthlessly to tighten the authoritarian regime his predecessor had imposed in her second term. Jayawardene revised the 1972 constitution and had himself elected executive president, setting up an oppressive state with the mere trappings of democracy. In 1980, he vindictively had Sirima's civic rights suspended for seven years for abuse of power - a crime of which he himself soon became much more guilty.

With Mrs Bandaranaike unable to play any public role, the SLFP was riven by discord. In the difficult years ahead, her main task was to hold the party together and, with very few cards to play, to counter Jayawardene's devious but masterly manoeuvres.

Succession to the party leadership became a bone of contention between her son Anura, who was moving to the right, and her daughter Chandrika, who eventually broke away and, with her popular film-star husband Vijaya Kumaranatunga, formed their own leftwing party - one of whose main aims was to seek a rapprochement with the Tamils. But with her civic rights restored in 1985, Mrs Bandaranaike recovered her place as unchallenged leader and the SLFP's fortunes rose again.

After Kumaranatunga's assassination in 1988, Chandrika eventually rejoined the SLFP and, proving herself a consummate politician, secured the party leadership in 1994 at the expense of Anura, who had angrily crossed over to the UNP. But, said Mrs Bandaranaike consolingly: "He's my son and I love him."

These were years of mounting violence in Sri Lanka, more often than not initiated by the government or the ruling UNP. After a nationwide pogrom against Tamils in 1983, they took to armed resistance with such effect that, in 1987, India sent in troops to impose a peace settlement. It failed, but Mrs Bandaranaike, once India's greatest ally on the island, hotly opposed the intervention, in the name of the Sinhalese nationalism she had long since embraced.

Without influence either in Delhi or among the Tamils, she was powerless to sway events. Nor could she prevent rising violence in the south. In 1989, the JVP, by now more chauvinist than Marxist, was crushed by the UNP government - with vastly greater brutality than in 1971. Estimates of the number slaughtered vary from 30,000 to 70,000; no prisoners were taken and no trials held - a sharp contrast with Mrs Bandaranaike's treatment of the JVP.

Her last bid for power came in the presidential elections of 1988, and the parliamentary polls of the following year. With the cards stacked so heavily against her by Jayawardene and his successor, Ranasinghe Premadasa, she could hardly win, though despite all the violence and electoral manipulation he used, Premadasa secured only 50.1% of the votes. However, the UNP lost its two-thirds majority in parliament, its chief weapon in manipulating the constitution. What finally broke the government was Premadasa's assassination in 1993.

Reluctant though she was to hand over the reins, age was telling on Mrs Bandaranaike. Impressed by Chandrika's brilliant campaigning, she stepped down just before the parliamentary elections in August 1994. It may have been part of the deal that when Chandrika also won the presidential elections three months later, she appointed her mother prime minister - a symbolic act intended to extirpate Jayawardene's injustice over her civic rights.

Real power, however, remained in her daughter's hands. Sirima retired as prime minister last August to allow her daughter to appoint a hardliner, in an attempt to boost the government's fight against Tamil separatists ahead of this week's elections.

With a more cosmopolitan outlook than her mother, and influenced by her late husband's ideals, Chandrika made a genuine effort to come to terms with the Tamils. But her father's miscalculations, her mother's ignorance and neglect of the Tamils, and what can only be described as Jayawardene's cynical viciousness towards them, created a legacy of Sinhalese intransigence and Tamil fanaticism that may have made the task impossible.

The Bandaranaiques - husband and widow - unquestionably broke the stifling colonial ethos of the English-speaking elite, and restored dignity and a rightful place to the Sinhalese majority. But it was done largely by exploiting their chauvinism, and at the expense of the Tamils, not least because Mrs Bandaranaike, like most Sinhalese, had little concept of her island as a multi-ethnic whole. If a country may be judged by how it treats its minorities, the failure to treat them properly in Sri Lanka has carried a fearsome price, which even yet has not been fully paid.

Bandaranaike is survived by her three children.

• Sirima Ratwatte Dias Bandaranaike, politician, born April 17 1916; died October 10 2000.

(Courtesy of The Guardian (London and Manchester) Wednesday October 11, 2000)

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MATRIMONIAL

Tamil Hindu parents seek professional bride for British born son, 31, Project Manager (Information Technology) in Global Financial Sector. Send horoscope, details. M 1206 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Tamil Catholic family seeks bridegroom for pretty, fair, kid sister, 33, London Honours science graduate, permanent resident, permanent pensionable London employment. Total confidentiality assured. M 1207 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek bridegroom in UK for medical doctor daughter, 25. Send horoscope, details. M 1208 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu mother seeks professional bride for British educated Business Management honours graduate son, 28, Director of prestigious firm. Send horoscope, details. M 1209 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional groom for daughter, 32, ACCA finalist in good employment. Send horoscope, details. M 1210 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional groom for British educated medical doctor, 32. Send details. M 1211 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu uncle seeks pretty, homely bride for nephew, 33, in well established business (with PR), Mars seventh house. M 1212 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu professional family seeks professional groom for British born daughter, 28, medical doctor. M 1213 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional groom for daughter Master in Information Technology working in prestigious bank, 30, innocent divorcee with two children. Send horoscope, details. M 1214 c/o

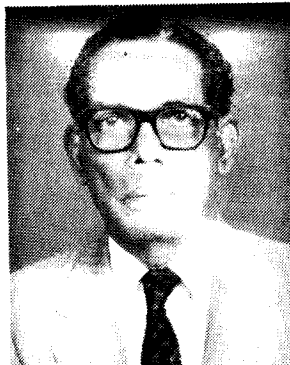
Tamil Times.

Doctor's son, Edinburgh University Honours graduate, Electrical and Electronic Engineering/Computing, British / New Zealand citizen, 36, seeks educated girl. M 1215 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek pleasant, cultured bride under 30 and in good employment for medical doctor son, 33. Please send full details, horoscope. M 1216 c/o Tamil Times.

Sri-Lankan Hindu parents of excellent background seek professional groom for their British born Chartered Accountant daughter, 27, in very responsible position. Welcome details from persons holding similar or higher positions. Please send full details, photograph, horoscope. M 1217 c/o Tamil Times.

OBITUARIES



Mr. S. Sivapathasundaram, eldest son of the late Maniagar Somasundaram Pillai and Kathirasipillai of Karampon, Jaffna; brother of the late Sivagnananayaki, Thailaynayaki, Theagarajapillai and of Periyamayaki; beloved husband of Gnanatheepam; loving father of Dr. Manjubhachini, Ravilochanan and the late Prasannavadhana; father-in-law of Sivanathan and Manjula; grandfather of Priyadarsheni and Sivaskandan passed away in London on 8th November 2000 and

was cremated at the South London Crematorium on 13th November.

The members of the family wish to thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy and assisted them in several ways during the period of bereavement - 55 Rectory Park, Sanderstead, Croydon, Surrey CR9 9JR. Tel: 020 8657 6901.

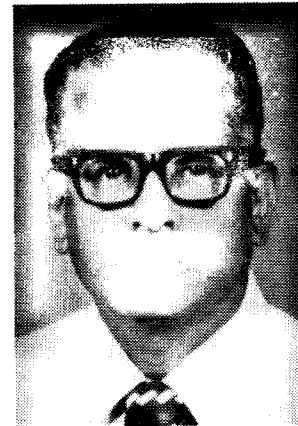


Poorani Sujithan departed this life in her 8th year after a bravely fought illness on 1.11.2000. She was a student

of Jaffna St. John Bosco Vidyalyayam.

Her loving memory will forever reside in the hearts of those who survive her. Living with her memory are her beloved father Devarajan Sujithan (Bank of Ceylon, Jaffna/Colombo), mother Jeyadevi Sujithan (Jaffna Hindu Ladies College), sister Uthami (Jaffna Hindu Ladies College), paternal grandmother Pathmadevi Devarajan (Kantharmadam), maternal grandmother Saraswathy Panchadcharam (Neervely), appu padda Punjaksharam (Teacher of English, Neervely), padda Gananathalingam (Retired Deputy Director, Ceylon Customs), Pooranam Achchi, uncles, aunts and cousins. Her paternal grandfather Namasiyavayam Deva Rajan (Licensed Surveyor, Kantharmadam, Yalpanam), and maternal grandfather Panchadcharam (KKS Cement Factory) preceded her in death. - Rengan, Flat 4, 24 Mansfield Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 3AZ: Tel. 020 8553 2632..

In Memory of Our Father The Late Mr. Richard Jeyarajasingam



Appa, the day is still fresh in our minds
When the Lord decided to take you home.
It is hard to believe that ten long years have passed,
Not a day went by without your thoughts,
You have been a role model of a father,
An earthly father who fits God's plans and purpose.
We thank the Lord for your life
As our Heavenly Father assures us that
'In His presence there is fullness of joy. ... (Psalm 18:11)
We will encourage each other with this promise
Until we meet again.
Fondly remembered and sadly missed
Your loving wife Rane, Children Ranjan, Seelan,
Shanthy, Jayanthy and their families.

IN MEMORIAM

Lovingly Remembered on the 11 Anniversary of the
Passing Away of



Daniel Selvarajah Sanders Ph.D., ACSW
Sept 28 1928 – Oct 14 1989

*The Tenth Annual Daniel S. Sanders Peace and Social Justice
Lecture*

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

Dan was Dean Professor and Director for the Center for the Study of International Social Welfare Policies and Services, University of Illinois, School of Social Work at Urbana-Champaign from 1986-1989.

A founder and First President, Inter-University Consortium for International Social Development (IUCISD) 1989. The IUCISD membership has grown to about 85 countries. The IUCISD – European Branch had its biennial conference in Riga, Latvia, Sept 26-30, 2000 on Social Work and Social Development – New Trends in a Changing Europe. Dr. Piotr Salustowicz, President of the IUCISD-European Branch, mentioned Dan's writings in his paper presentation, 'Internationalisation and Academicisation in Social Work Education.'

Professor Julian Bond, President Emeritus of the Southern Law and Poverty Center, former Georgia State Senator and Representative gave the 10th Annual Daniel S. Sanders Lecture on March 28, 2000 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus. Julian Bond is known nationally for his work toward social change and justice.

This event is sponsored annually by the School of Social Work and is an important campus and community event. The lecture was supported by the School, the Daniel S. Sanders Peace and Social Justice Lecture Fund which was established by Mrs. Christobel Chelvathy Sanders and by 25 additional units on the University of Illinois campus.

The title of Professor Bond's address was '2000: A Race Odyssey'. He reviewed the role which race has played in American life and culture from an historical perspective, focusing primarily on the 20th century. His presentation paralleled the founding of the NAACP (National Association of African and Colored People) and its role in the fight for equal justice. Professor Bond spoke about the role of race in American society and the progress for justice and equal rights for all as being a pivotal point in American culture and life during the last century. In considering race relations, he explored what possibilities exist for achieving racial justice and equity in the future. Bond said that racism is still present in America very much. . . . Even though enormous progress has been made, in some ways these are more difficult times. . . . It is more difficult to attack now because it does not have legal sanction.

A dinner was hosted as usual by Professors Sri and Beth Namachchivaya in their home 'Serendib' with Mrs. Sanders to honor the speaker.

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

IN MEMORIAM

First Death Anniversary



*In Ever Loving Memory of
Viranjani Rajika Malalgoda
on the First Anniversary of her
passing away under tragic cir-
cumstances on 7th November
1999.*

*It's a year since you went
away,
Time is a great healer they
say,
Noi for us darling,
Each passing day we miss you
more and more.*

*We treasure your last words,
'Thank you for everything
mum, I've enjoyed my stay'
Chooty darling, thank you for
being,
Our daughter and our friend.*

*To see you smile once more,
To hold you close to our heart,
To tell you how much we love
you,
And how proud we are of you.*

*Chooty, we love and miss you
so much,
Rest in God's special Garden.
We will always miss you.
Love you forever.*

Mum and Dad

*Lonely is the home without
you,
Life to us is not the same,
All the world would be like
heaven,
If we could have you back
again.*

*We think of you in silence,
We talk about you too,
We have lots of lovely memo-
ries,
But we wish, we still had you
with us.*

*Always in our Thoughts,
Love you always.*

**Aiya and Saloni
Indra & Mahinda Malalgoda**
'Shanthinivasa', 96 Celeborn
Street, South Woodham Fer-
fers, Essex CM3 7AF.



*In fond memory of Dr. P.
Alageswaran on the eighth
anniversary of his passing
away on 10th November 1992.*

*Much loved and missed by
Ratnes, Krishna, Shyamala,
family, friends and relations.*

**Mrs Chandra Ragupathy**

*In ever loving memory of my
wife Chandra on the fifth
anniversary of her passing
away on 26th November 1995.*

*Sadly missed and fondly
remembered as always by her
loving husband Ragupathy. -
262 Wicklemarsh Road, Lon-
don SE3 8DW.*

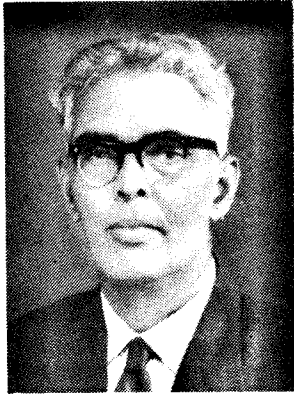


*In loving memory of Miss
Daisy Selvaranee Rasiah on
the second anniversary of her
passing away on 10th Novem-
ber 1998.*

*'Love and Remembrance
Last for ever.'*

*Greatly loved, Deeply
missed and always remem-
bered by all her loved ones. -
64, Jessup Close, London
SE18.*

25th Anniversary Remembrance



Chinniah Vethanayagam Edward (C.V.E) Navarathasingam

Born: Udupiddy 06/02/1908
Died: Pandateruppu 01/12/1975

Principal and Teacher – Govt. Mahavidyalaya, Delft; Govt. Mahavidyalaya, Erlalai; St. Joseph's, Mathagal; St. Anthony's, Kayts; St. Joseph's, Bandarawela; St. Henry's, Illavalai; beloved husband of late Soramma Regina; loving father,

Dependable friend, Unfailing Helper of the poor and the needy.

Remembered by family and friends

Mr. & Mrs. J. Singarayer and children, Dr. & Mrs. N.A.C. Mohanraj and children, Mr. S. Nadarajah and Mr. & Mrs. R. Maruthalingam.



In loving memory of **Mr. P. V. Nadarajah** on the twelfth anniversary of his passing away on 16th November 1988.

Fondly remembered and sadly missed by his beloved wife Thilagavathy; loving children Usha, Varathan, Nalini

and Nanthini; sons-in-law Sivanathan, Rajkumar and Vathsayan; daughter-in-law Savithiri; grandchildren Bairavi, Luxmi, Uruthiran, Abhirami, Sebastian and Isabel. - 11 Stapleford Close, Southfields, London SW19 6TG. Tel: 020 8789 4798.

Appreciation on page (33)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- Dec 1 Shashti.
- Dec 3 Feast of Francis Xavier.
- Dec 6 Feast of St. Nicholas.
- Dec 7 Sukkla Eekathasi; Feast of St. Ambrose.
- Dec 8 Pirathosam; Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- Dec 9 Karthigai; Thirukarthigai Theepam; 7.30pm SCOT Christmas Dinner & Dance at Acton Town Hall, Acton High Street, London W3 6NE. Tel: 020 8870 9897; 2.30pm South London Tamil Welfare Group (SLTWG) Children's Party, at John Innes Youth Centre, 61 Kingston Road, London SW19. Tel: 020 8542 3285.

Dec 10 Full Moon; Sarvaalaya Theepam; 4pm Putney Church Carol Service at Rivercourt Methodist Church, King Street, Hammersmith, London W6.

Dec 13 Feast of St. Lucy.

Dec 14 Sankadakara Sathurthi; Feast of St. John of the Cross.

Dec 16 7pm SLTWG Christmas Dinner at Merton Hall, 76 Kingston Road, London SW19. Tel: 020 8542 3275,

Dec 21 Eekathasi; 6.30pm Christmas Celebrations at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HG. Tel: 020 7381 3086/4608. All cordially invited.

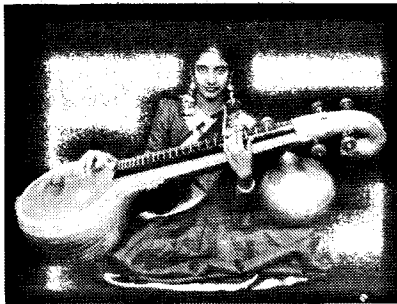
Dec 22 Pirathosam.

Dec 25 Amavasai; Christmas Day.

Dec 29 Sathurthi; Feast of St. Thomas.

Dec 31 Shashti; Thiruvembavai starts; Feast of St. Sylvester.

Veena Vinotham



Jananee, a student of Smt Sivasakthi Sivanesan of the Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan ascended the stage with her Veena on 21st October 2000 at the Beck Theatre, Hayes, Middx.

The concert started off with an 'Atha' thala varnam in the raga Kanada and continued with compositions of Dikshitar, Thyagaraja and Guru Surajananda. The tradition was strictly observed and every composition played to the musical grammar of Carnatic music. After the interval, the first piece was a composition of Mysore Vasudevachari in the raga Sunadavinohini, a rare raga very seldom sung or played. The raga chosen for the main piece was Kalyani. This raga was played well showing the key aspects of it. The 'Thanam' and the 'Pallavi' followed with grace and elegance. The con-

cert concluded with miscellaneous pieces. On the whole the concert was good quality. The courage and conviction of the young lady should be commended.

The accompanists for this concert were Sri M. Balachander on Mruthangam and Sri R.N. Prakash on Gatam. These two musicians never fail to enhance the concert, whether the artiste is a professional or novice. They seemed to enjoy the occasion and encouraged the newcomer. A stage without them is music without notes.

The Arangetrasm was unique in that the Chief Guest was a renowned Veena player, Smt Kalpagam Swaminathan. This lady is an exponent in the field and knows every composition of Dikshitar by heart. In her speech, she commended the young artiste's potential. No word can excel her comments. I was reminded of the saying, 'Vashisdar vayal Bhramma rishi.' What else can one say of Jananee, a young and talented lady?

Hindolam.

Books for Donation
Prof. Kopan Mahadeva is donating hundreds of English books from his personal library in Engineering, Management, Economics, O.R., Ergonomics, Poetry, Fiction, etc., to interested Tamils in UK from
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மகிழ்ச்சி

Putney Church Carol Service

The much celebrated LTCC Choirs accompanied by Western & Eastern instruments would be heard singing modern and traditional carols at Putney Church Carol Service in Hammersmith, London W6. This time 4 short sketches are included in the service within the theme (மகிழ்ச்சி); subtitled Beauty for Brokenness.

The sketches open with Moses of Old, depicting the harsh realities of life faced with the Call of God. M.J. Gunaratnam plays this leading role. Andrew Muthukumar complements the supporting role as his eldest son Gershom. This scene captures the emotions of the past and resurrects the memories of contemporary contexts. The Junior Church blends their cute acting skills in sketch 2 by exploring modern innuendoes. Sound effects, lights, background music and prompting are done by Rajan Dharmachandran. Rathika Rajan, Anusha Solomons and Kandiah, the consummate புகையிலை merchant of the North, caricatured by Sri Haran takes centre stage by tickling the funny-bones in sketches 3 and 4. Gladstone Worthington plucks the best out of Kandiah by playing Thamby, a youthful Oxford student. Thamby skillfully put Kandiah on the spot and takes him on a spiritual journey. The curtain closes with 'CNN live' – the Nativity reporter Barry Walker interviewing Kandiah at the Crib in Bethlehem... the rest, as they say is history!

மகிழ்ச்சி will be held on Dec. 10th 2000 at 4pm at Rivercourt Methodist Church, King Street, Hammersmith.

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Mr. Rajan, President of LTCC hopes that the 'Heart-felt Appeal' for 'a free-will offering to be collected at this well attended service to send generous funds to provide much needed help for hospitals in the war zones' would be successful. Minister, Putney Church Revd. B.J. Alexander confirms 'In the midst of celebrations, we want to pause to bring practical support to our brethren. The service is something beautiful for brokenness.'

Earl Chambers.

Mr. P. V. Nadarajah - An Appreciation

The passing away of Mr. P.V. Nadarajah has plunged all of us in immeasurable grief. We have all lost a good friend, the like of whom is very rare these days. Skanda Varodaya College has lost a loyal old pupil and a former science teacher, par excellence. My family and I have lost one who was deeply attached to us, one whom I counted as one of my most loyal and trusted old pupils.

Mr. Nadarajah belonged to the first batch of five students who entered the University of Ceylon for Physical Science and Medicine, offering Physics as a subject. Mr. T. Kandasamy, who recently retired from the post of Government Analyst, the first to enter, did not offer Physics, as our Physics laboratory was not adequate then for University entrance work. I advised Nadarajah and others to go to schools with better laboratories if they wished to offer Physics but Nadarajah insisted on staying with us and others also followed him. I was moved by this confidence in us and wished to help them. I requested the late principal Selliah of Jaffna College to let our boys do practical work in his college. He readily agreed and also supervised their work and helped them. Nadarajah and two others were admitted for the physical science to the University of Ceylon and the other two for medicine.

When he graduated he joined our staff and served in Skantha for 10 years. He taught Physics in the upper forms and along with Mr. Durairajah produced those excellent University Entrance and Advanced Level results which placed Skantha in a pre-eminent position among Jaffna schools. He took part in all the activities of the college and performed more work there than what mere duty required. He won the love and regard of both the teachers and pupils. Then he joined Mahajana College and served 7 years. He also worked in the Educational Publications Department from where he went to Nigeria and taught Physics to the University Entrance classes and produced good results. He won the commendations of the Education Department there and his service was extended from time to time. Ill health forced him to return to Sri Lanka.

He was well informed on many matters especially in modern science and technology, had a keen intellect and a lively sense of humour and these made him a pleasant person to talk to. He was straight forward and forthright in stating his views and it used to be a pleasurable experience to me to discuss school matters with him especially when we disagreed. He was a man of strong convictions and would not budge

even an inch from a position when he was convinced that it was the right one. He was possessed of abundant humanity and helped those who needed his help. Such men rarely pass this way.

May he attain Moksha.

C. Subramaniam.

Kalaimamani Award for Booshany Kalyanaraman



The State Government of Tamil Nadu in recognition of outstanding contributions made by artistes every year in different fields such as Music, Art, Drama, Films etc awards the title of Kalaimamani. This year the prestigious award for music went to Booshany Kalyanaraman, She is the first Sri Lankan artiste to win the coveted award for Carnatic Vocal music. She is presently Professor of Carnatic Music at Kalakshetra.

Booshany is a daughter of Sangeetha Booshanam Kulasegerampillai of Velanai, Sri Lanka and former Carnatic Music master at Royal College, Colombo.

Mr. A. Q. V. Phillips - An Appreciation

It was with great sadness and a sense of deep loss that we received the news that Anthony Quintin Vivian Phillips, popularly known as Quintin had passed away peacefully in London on 10th August 2000.

Quintin was born on 31st October 1921 in Jaffna into a well respected Catholic family, had his education at St. Patricks College, Jaffna where he passed the London Matriculation and joined the Ceylon Government Railway in 1942. After serving at various stations, he prematurely retired in 1962, worked in the mercantile sector till his retirement. He married Merlyn and had four children, who are all married and settled in life, three in UK and one in the States. After his wife predeceased him in 1989, he migrated to UK in 1990 to live with his children. In the UK he took a keen interest in the activities of the Sri Lanka Railway Past Employees Welfare Association and St. Patrick's College Old Boy's Association till his death. He had not forgotten his motherland, and visited Sri Lanka at least once in two years to see his kith and kin.

He was a social worker, whose ability and total dedication in serving the community, culminated in his being honoured and appointed an All Island Justice of Peace in Sri Lanka.

When working for the Trains Control Office, Maradana he fell foul of his superior officers for his forthrightness in pointing out a wrong decision and standing up for what he thought was right.

Quintin by his actions built in his associates the sense of togetherness, of co-operation and respect for each other's values and traditions and his life was marked by his loving attitude to those around him. He was a devout Catholic, sincere, honest, genuine and down-to-earth with an unblemished character and a self effacing personality of unassuming manners. We have lost a good friend and the large number of mourners of all faiths and races at his funeral bear testimony to the respect and regard they had for him.

Our condolences go out to his children Charmaine, Lorraine, Jasmine, Ravi, sons-in-law, daughter-in-law and grandchildren and pray that the almighty grant them the strength to bear the loss and the courage to face the future with equanimity and fortitude.

May his soul rest in peace.

M. Balasandrum,
Middx, UK

Happy 50th Birthday Anniversary on 4 December 2000



Hey Dolly

I still get jealous when they look at you,
I may not show it, I do,
It's more than what I can bear,
When they start to stare,
Cos, they think you're too good to be true.

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