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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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Probe Black July 1983

The Government is reported to have decided to carry out an independent investigation into the island-wide anti-Tamil pogrom of July 1983. Though incidents of ethnic violence and disturbances had occurred on previous occasions, the unprecedented violence unleashed on that occasion was the worst and the most widespread leading to long-lasting, damaging and irreparable consequences in regard to ethnic relations in Sri Lanka. It drastically changed course of the political history of the island leading to an intractable violent ethnic conflict resulting in the death of tens of thousands, and the displacement and dispersal of hundreds of thousands of people.

An attempt was made by the then government leaders to portray the attacks on Tamils and their property as reflecting the "justified anger" of the Sinhala people to the killing of 13 soldiers by the Tamil Tigers on 23 July 1983 in northern Jaffna. However, the manner in which the attacks were carried out manifested a high degree of premeditation and organisation. Although the Tamils and their property were targeted throughout the country, there was a remarkable similarity in the methods used.

The attacking gangs knew exactly where to go and what properties to attack. The identification and selection was done with remarkable precision. The gang leaders had lists of names of owners, occupiers and addresses of properties they targeted for attack. They knew exactly whether a particular property, shop, factory or a house was occupied, owned or rented by a Tamil. If it was owned by a Tamil, it was looted and set on fire. If a Tamil occupied the property as a tenant of a Sinhala landlord, care was taken to assemble and burn only its contents. If there was a property owned by a Sinhalese adjoining a property earmarked for destruction, efforts were made to ensure that the former was not affected.

The weapons and implements the gangs used were also remarkably similar. The iron rods and wooden clubs were surprisingly similar. They all carried with them white plastic petrol cans to facilitate complete destruction of properties. The petrol and the cans came from State Petroleum Corporation. In every case, the gangs saw to it that all vehicles - lorries, vans, cars, motor cycles and even bicycles - in the vicinity of properties were also destroyed.

The pre-planning and organisation behind the violence were also apparent from the coordinated manner in which the various gangs moved from place to place with remarkable ease. They had vehicles provided for them and many of the vehicles belonged to the State Corporations. Gangs were transported from Colombo and its suburbs to distant places and vice versa with amazing speed.

The aim of the operation was to destroy the economic base of the Tamils. This was demonstrated by the fact that most of the important and larger business and factories owned by Tamils were set on fire and destroyed within the first few hours, though they were located at widely different and distant places.

On 25 July, the very first day of the pogrom, in an unparalleled orgy of brutality, 35 Tamil political prisoners detained without trial in the high security prison in Colombo were massacred reportedly by fellow Sinhala condemned prisoners. Two days later in repeat performance, 18 more Tamil detainees were similarly massacred.

Until three days into the pogrom, no one from the Government, including the all-powerful executive President J R Jayawardene did appear in public or on television to appeal for the violence to be stopped. When he eventually appeared, he neither expressed condemnation of the violence nor did he convey any sympathy to the victims of the violence.

The role of the forces of law and order including the police and the army, to say the least, was one of collusion and collaboration with those who carried out attacks on Tamils and Tamil property.

The reason for the then government's refusal to carry out a formal investigation into the July 1983 pogrom was quite apparent: the primary culprits for masterminding and executing the violent incidents were elements within the government itself. Many books and documents have since been written and published giving details of those individuals and organisations associated with the then government who organised and carried out the pogrom.

For 18 years, the perpetrators of the violent attacks upon the Tamil community and their properties in July 1983 have remained officially unidentified and unpunished, and this has been due to the fact of the State's complicity in the pogrom of July 1983. This black chapter in the country's history must not be allowed to remain unexplored and uninvestigated. It is not too late for a comprehensive impartial investigation to be instituted.

● The Peace Process

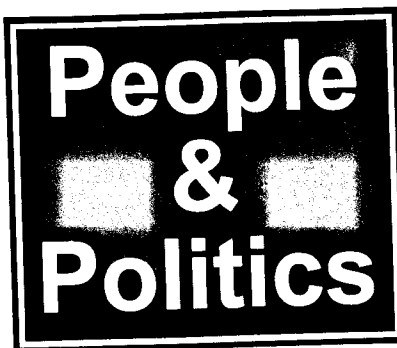
The demand by the LTTE to lift the ban imposed on it and its rejection by the Government have brought about a stalemate in the peace process.

During discussions between Erik Solheim and S P Tamil Chelvam, the leader of the political wing of the Tigers, on 17 May and in subsequent statements the LTTE made it clear that it would not enter peace talks until its "pre-requisite" of its proscription by the Sri Lankan government was lifted. It said that it would not negotiate as an "outlawed outfit".

The government on May 26 rejected the LTTE's call to lift the ban on it to facilitate the Norwegian mediated political negotiations pointing out that lifting or suspending the ban could only be an outcome of the negotiations. "The lifting or the suspension of the proscription of the LTTE cannot be accepted as a "pre-requisite" or "pre-condition" for the commencement of negotiations; it can, if at all, only be an outcome of the negotiation process. "The LTTE's demand for the removal of the proscription prior to the commencement of negotiations is unreasonable and is intended to delay and, if possible, prevent the commencement of the negotiation process," the government statement said.

It called upon the LTTE to desist from placing one obstacle after another in the way of the peace process, and requested it to honour the statement of its leader in his speech of 27 May, 2000: "We are not imposing any pre-conditions for peace talks." The government statement also called upon all the communities of Sri Lanka and the international community "to persuade the LTTE to enter the peace process with sincerity of purpose, to facilitate and not to hinder the commencement of that process and to pursue it honestly to the successful conclusion that so many millions earnestly desire."

Two parties in the governing Peoples Alliance coalition, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and the Communist Party (CP), issued a statement in support of the government's position stating that: "The pressure resulting from the ban is one of the factors that has led to the LTTE agreeing to having peace talks facilitated by Norway. It is clear that the request for the lifting of



the ban in Sri Lanka is directed towards undermining similar moves abroad. The Sri Lankan Government should not for the sake of talks give in on this issue. The ban on the LTTE was lifted by the UNP government in 1988 by legislation in Parliament, a far more difficult process than what is required today, but this did not lead to any fruitful talks with the LTTE. The same is likely to occur here and the government would lose the advantage it has generated internationally while also playing into the hands of its extremist critics in the South."

The statement of the LSSP and CP added that "the LTTE should keep to its word and come into unconditional talks with the government. The sudden imposition of three conditions - a ceasefire, the lifting of restrictions on goods reaching the LTTE controlled areas and the lifting of the ban on the LTTE is not essential for the commencement of talks. These are all matters that could be resolved in the course of the talks themselves. We agree with the government decision to accommodate the LTTE on the first two conditions and also to refuse to give in on the third."

The LTTE's response to the government's refusal of its demand was quick and hard-hitting to say the least. In a statement issued from its Vanni headquarters, calling upon the Government to reconsider its position for the sake of peace and ethnic reconciliation, the LTTE warned, "If the Government adopts a hard-line position and refuses to review its decision on proscription, then it should bear full and total responsibility for the collapse of the peace efforts and the serious consequences that might arise from its decision."

The LTTE statement said, "Our call for lifting of the proscription is made with the purpose of enabling us to participate in the peace talks as legitimate

representatives of our people, as co-partners in constructive engagement. The LTTE has on several occasions raised the question of de-proscription with the Norwegian peace envoy Mr. Solheim when he met our chief negotiator Mr. Anton Balasingham in London. Mr. Balasingham has also made statements on public forums as well as in the media to the effect that the lifting of the ban is urgent and crucial for peace negotiations. We cannot participate in the peace talks as an illegal and criminal entity with a 'terrorist' label. We are the sole legitimate representatives of the people of Tamil Eelam. In the past, we have engaged in peace talks with Sri Lanka, in Thimpu, in Colombo and in Jaffna without the 'terrorist' label. Therefore, it is fair and reasonable on our part to seek recognition of our legitimate status as the representative political organisation of our people before the commencement of political talks. The talks, as well as the product of the talks, will have no credibility or validity if they are held between incompatible, unequal actors; between the so-called legal government and a condemned illegal entity. It is wrong to assume that we are imposing impossible demands to prevent the commencement of peace talks. On the contrary we have suggested these proposals as necessary and urgent steps to help to facilitate and promote the peace process."

"Our armed resistance campaign is primarily aimed at protecting our land and our people from Sinhala state terrorist oppression and aggression. Our armed resistance is none other than reactive violence to state terrorism. The Tamil struggle cannot be categorised as a phenomenon of terrorism. It is a struggle for self-preservation based on the inalienable right to existence. The Sri Lankan state has been conducting a global disinformation campaign branding the Tamil resistance as 'international terrorism' in an effort to cover-up its own crimes of state terror. It is precisely for this reason that the Kumaratunga Government refuses to remove the label of 'terrorism' on our liberation organisation", the LTTE's statement added.

● Divided Opinion

As the peace process remains without any further progress, opinion in the

island is divided on the issue of the deproscription of the LTTE. Most of the Tamil political parties favour the lifting of the ban on the LTTE to enable the peace process to be taken forward. However, a well known leader of another Tamil political group, the Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), who wanted to remain unidentified for security reasons, said that the "Tigers should forthwith refrain from suppressing other Tamil political parties before asking the Government to lift the ban imposed on them before the talks." He made the statement following the assassination of the Vavuniya district PLOTE's political wing leader, Tamil Vasan. Two gunmen arrived at his residence in Mannar on Tuesday night (29 May) and shot him dead. The PLOTE leader pointed out that, before asking for its ban to be lifted, the LTTE should lift the ban it had imposed on all other Tamil parties since 1989 which has continued to this day.

The Sinhala ultra-nationalist sections violently oppose any move at deproscription. To them, relentless war against the LTTE and a military solution is the only option.

The main opposition United National Party (UNP) and its leader Ranil Wickremasinghe, who are otherwise engaged in a feverish effort at bringing down the government through a no-confidence motion in parliament, have conveniently evaded making their position clear on the issue.

Then there are those, including editors and leading commentators primarily from the privately-owned media, who are not only totally opposed to the lifting the ban on the LTTE, but also regard the effort at negotiating peace with the LTTE as a foolish and a futile enterprise.

There are some peace activists whose overriding objective is to bring about an end to the ongoing war who say that the government should take whatever risks there may be in lifting the ban on the LTTE if that would enable peace talks at least to begin. There are others who advocate that the ban on the LTTE should at least be suspended until the duration of peace negotiations if the issue of the ban remains the only obstacle for peace talks to begin.

Then there are others who say that the ban be lifted once the LTTE and Government signs the Memorandum of Understanding on Humanitarian issues affecting the North and East, about which much agreement and understanding has already been reached by both sides.

Still there are others, including local and foreign political analysts and conflict resolution experts, who have yet another suggestion: that in return for the lifting of the ban, the LTTE should undertake to renounce the use of violence or the threat of use of violence in general, and specifically not to resort to acts of terrorism including political assassinations, attacks on civilians, civilian and non-military targets.

● Upgrading Norway's Role

President's preoccupation was with peace talks that had stalled with the government's rejection of the LTTE's demand for its deproscription. She, accompanied by Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, had discussions with Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorbjorn Jagland, who had flown to Colombo along with Eric Solheim, for four hours over dinner on 7 June. But Solheim was kept out of the confidential discussions following which an announcement was made that the Norwegian facilitatory role in the peace process would be upgraded to senior official level participation which provoked inevitable speculation in the media that Norway's special envoy Erik Solheim was being sidelined.

It is learnt that the visit to Colombo by the Norwegian Foreign Minister was the result of a recent letter written to him by Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, which sought to place the understanding between Sri Lanka and Norway on the participation of the latter in the peace process as an understanding between two sovereign states.

Following the discussions, a press release from the Foreign Ministry in Colombo said it was decided at the meeting that "Norway will henceforth participate at a high-level to advance the peace process involving the LTTE."

The state-owned Sunday Observer (10 June), quoting diplomatic sources said that the decision to upgrade the level of Norwegian facilitation was due

to the fact that "the present facilitator, Special Envoy Erik Solheim, is only an Opposition politician in Norway and was not closely linked to the government in Oslo. There was a concern that if Mr. Solheim personally decided to withdraw, the entire peace process may be derailed or delayed. What the Government had sought, and Norway has now agreed to, was the formal and official involvement of the Norwegian government itself so that Oslo's role would continue at an official level whichever party came to power there."

In Oslo, returning from his talks in Colombo, Foreign Minister Jagland told reporters on 9 June that it was now time for stronger political engagement by Norway, in order to make headway in the stalled peace negotiations adding that his talks with President Kumaratunga reviewed the status of the peace efforts, in order to decide how to move forward. He also said that he would now schedule meetings with the LTTE, but that no venue or dates had been set.

Contacted in Oslo, Mr. Solheim told reporters that this 'possibly means that the (Norwegian) Foreign Minister will continue to involve himself with the peace process' while denying that his role had been downgraded.

President Kumaratunga and Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar were said to have been unhappy with Solheim since his May 17 Vanni trip when he met with LTTE Political Wing leader S. P. Thamilselvan who spelt out LTTE's firm position that it would not talk to the Sri Lankan Government as a proscribed organisation.

Solheim, on his return to Colombo, conveyed to President Kumaratunga and Kadirgamar the LTTE position and told them to consider lifting the ban against the LTTE at least temporarily, a suggestion that was unacceptable to the government.

Sources close to the Sri Lankan foreign ministry say that what upset the government most was that Solheim was 'talking too much' engaging in giving high profile much publicised media interviews about the peace process and his role in it instead of engaging in behind-the-scene diplomatic efforts to narrow the gap between the two sides to enable peace talks to commence at the earliest opportunity. In some of his statements he appeared to want the in-

ternational community to bring pressure on the government to lift the ban on the LTTE. What became critical was that Solheim, who had accompanied Jagland to Washington, during discussions with US Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, had urged the American government to exert pressure on Colombo to temporarily lift the ban.

Kadirgamar is reported to have told Jagland during the June 7 dinner meeting the embarrassment Solheim's Washington visit and his media statements had caused them and suggested Jagland's official and direct involvement thus diminishing Solheim's role. Jagland had agreed.

LTTE read more in this move than the mere sidelining of Solheim. The angry reaction of the LTTE for the move to sideline Solheim and upgrade Norway's role was contained in a statement issued by the LTTE on 10 June which "expressed its displeasure over the unilateral initiative taken by the Sri Lankan government to effect a change in the role and function of the Norwegian peace envoy Mr. Erik Solheim. This initiative was undertaken to downgrade and marginalise Mr. Solheim from his active, impartial facilitatory role under the guise of upgrading the level of Norwegian involvement."

"The hasty manner in which the Norwegian Foreign Minister Mr. Jagland was summoned to Colombo for a closed door secret meeting with President Kumaratunga and the Foreign Minister Mr. Kadirgamar, where a critical decision was made to up-grade the status of facilitation without the consultation of the LTTE, the other party in the conflict, is, in our view, improper. The facilitatory process in peace making is not an exercise in inter-governmental relations; it involves tripartite relations between the facilitator and the parties in conflict. As a facilitator, the Government of Norway is under obligation to consult both protagonists before making crucial decisions with regards to its level of involvement or engagement. Making a bi-lateral decision with the government of Sri Lanka, circumventing the other party in conflict entails a breach of protocol and neutrality", the LTTE's statement said.

"We are well aware that powerful elements in the Kumaratunga Government, including Mr. Kadirgamar, were

unhappy with Mr. Solheim's facilitatory role. Mr. Solheim avoided controversy and criticism of both the parties in the conflict and maintained impeccable neutrality, a rare quality that was viewed with suspicion and apprehension in Sri Lankan political discourse. In our view Mr. Solheim has made indefatigable endeavours over the last two years, facing insurmountable difficulties to achieve considerable progress in the peace effort. Therefore, it is sad to note that the Sri Lanka government has deliberately effected a crafty diplomatic ruse to down-grade and marginalise Mr. Solheim by a ploy of up-grading the facilitatory engagement", the LTTE's statement added.

The question that remains to be answered is whether the peace process has been advanced by the "upgrading" of Norway's role and sidelining of Solheim particularly in the context of such a response from the LTTE.

● National Government

The suggestion of forming a "National Government", presumably comprising the governing Peoples Alliance and the opposition United National Party, attributed to Prime Minister Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake was a topic of much discussion in the Colombo media. But when asked, President Chandrika Kumaratunga said that no discussions had been held by her as Head of Government, as President of the SLFP and Chairman of the People's Alliance with regard to the forming of a National Government. But not denying that the suggestion had come from her Prime Minister, she said that there was absolute democracy in the Government, the SLFP and the PA and the members were entitled to make their personal views known.

With the UNP's summary rejection of the proposal, the battle line was clearly drawn. The 2-paragraph statement issued by UNP's media spokesman Dr. Karunasena Kodituwakku on June 13 called the proposal "a hoax" mooted by the Government to extricate itself from the abundant social, political and judicial predicaments it faced. It reiterated UNP's determination to proceed with its plan to defeat the Government in Parliament and end its "misrule".

The UNP's attempt to bring down

the PA Government is targeted for late July, the period picked by its Opposition Whip V.J.M. Lokkubandara, a firm believer in astrology, as it is a period favourable to his leader Ranil Wickremesinghe and adverse to President Kumaratunga. The draft of the no-confidence motion against the Government was finalised on June 8 and Wickremesinghe signed it amidst the roar of Jayawewa meaning victory. Seventy-seven other MPs who were present at the UNP parliamentary group meeting signed the motion. Kodituwakku told newsmen on June 14 that All Ceylon Tamil Congress leader A. Vinayagamoorthy had signed the motion and some Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) too had signed it. Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) too would sign.

"The entire opposition is backing the no-confidence motion," Wickremesinghe told the meeting and added that 13 ruling People's Alliance (PA) MPs had met him and assured their support for the attempt to defeat the government. He instructed his party-men to bring to him only the government members who are willing to support the no confidence move unconditionally.

This announcement caused ripples in the Government ranks. Minister S. B. Dissanayake, secretary general of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), the main constituent of the PA, was also upset. He had also learnt about the meeting some Government M. Ps had with UNP stalwarts. He telephoned and told President Kumaratunga the information he had gathered. The President told him not to worry and that she would handle the matter. The President is confident that the UNP threat could be overcome. Dissanayake was not that confident.

● Cost of Living

There was also concern about the spiralling cost of living which the opposition, particularly the JVP, was using with telling effect to cause disaffection with the Government. The fact that the JVP is growing rapidly was revealed by the second survey Colombo University's Centre for Anthropology conducted in April this year. In the first survey done last October, two weeks before the parliamentary election respondents were asked, firstly, to iden-

tify the most pressing problem the country faced and, secondly, to state which of the two major parties had the capability to solve that problem. Seventy percent of the people identified war as the most pressing problem and 47% of them felt that the PA possessed the capacity to solve it against 33% who trusted the UNP. Though unasked 12% expressed their conviction that the JVP was best suited to end the debilitating war.

In April the second question was repeated and the percentages, 45% for the PA, 32% for the UNP and 17% for the JVP reflected people's disenchantment with the major parties. Prof. S. T. Hettige, who heads the Centre for Anthropology, interpreted JVP's surge in popularity, a 5% rise in 6 months, as protest against the two major parties than the people's belief in its capacity to end the war. The fact that JVP is enjoying increased influence is became visible with the strikes it engineered in some industrial establishments and its infiltration into the armed forces and the farming community. It is currently exploiting the mounting cost of living to strengthen itself.

S B Dissanayake voiced his worry about the climbing cost of living and the ascending popularity of the JVP when he called on the Prime Minister on June 8 who, in turn, shared his concern about the increasing pressure from two of the coalition parties, Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC), are exerting on President Kumaratunga. They evolved two solutions to these problems: the need to appoint a separate minister to handle finance and the requirement of a National Government to unite the Sinhalese and safeguard their interests.

Finance Ministry is now held by the President and is virtually run by the officials who, the Prime Minister and Dissanayake, one of the two deputy ministers of finance, felt were yielding to the dictates of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, paying scant concern to the interests of the common man. They decided to meet the President together with the other deputy Finance Minister, Prof. G. L. Peiris.

Peiris is equally concerned with rising prices, especially that of essential goods: rice, bread, vegetables, fish, gas,

electricity and water. Diesel prices were almost doubled within the past year making travel and transport costly. Bus fare was raised by 15% in January and another similar increase is due soon. Lorry hire charge hike has upped the prices of almost all goods including vegetables. Farm inputs, fertiliser, pesticides and tractor hire now cost more. Fishermen, who rely on diesel-powered motorised vessels, charge more for their catch.

For Kusuma Goonetilleke, mother of five children, the situation is intolerable. She wailed: "I cook fish only twice a week. I manage two more days with eggs, cook chicken every Sunday and dried fish the other two days." She had halved the weight of the fish and chicken she cooks and limited the vegetable to one. "I am sorry for my children," she said. Kusuma's husband is a government servant and his take home pay is Rs. 6500. "With the salary my husband brings I buy less and less every month," she said effectively conveying the fact that the rupee is gradually losing its purchasing power.

The IMF had decreed that salaries of government servants should be frozen till the end of this year and President Kumaratunga had consented to this condition to entitle the country to draw a standby credit to manage the fast depleting foreign exchange reserves. The total foreign exchange reserves fell 18%, from US\$ 2852 million to US\$ 2126 million and official reserves slipped massive 36%, from US\$ 1639 million to US\$ 1043 during the year 2000. The decline continued during the first 3 months of this year, total foreign exchange reserves decreasing to US\$ 2040 and official reserves dropping to US\$ 942 million. The drop had not been arrested in April and May.

Added to this is the problem of large trade deficit that compels Sri Lanka to borrow from international institutions. Though overall trade deficit declined by 17% in the first quarter of this year compared to the first quarter of last year the amount, US\$ 328 million is considerable. If this trend continues the country may suffer trade deficit similar to the US\$ 1500 endured last year.

Added to these ills are those of trade deficit, rupee depreciation and inflation, all continues to grow. The com-

bined effect of all these is that locally produced and imported goods are becoming costly and Kusuma Goonetilleke buys less and less goods with her husband's earning.

Thanikasalam's plight is worse. An employee in a security firm he takes home less than Rs. 4000 a month and his wife struggles to keep the home fire burning. Over half of Sri Lanka's 2.5 million families are worse off than Thanikasalam and they eke a pitiable existence. Middle-aged Terrance Perera of Hambantota speaks for them: "It's extremely difficult to live." Terrance sees JVP as his deliverer.

Dissanayake and Peiris who meet the people of their electorates every week are aware of the economic hardship the people face. They briefed the President about the plight of the people and were preparing the ground for the Prime Minister to talk about their mission when the President is learnt to have suddenly asked: "Would you agree if we temporarily de-proscribe the LTTE and talk to them?" The Prime Minister voiced his firm opposition and the other two kept silent.

● Parliament v the Judiciary

A virtual constitutional crisis seems to have resulted from the attempt by the UNP-led opposition to present a motion in Parliament to impeach the holder of the highest judicial office in the island, Chief Justice Sarath Nanda Silva.

Even as the motion was being presented to the Speaker of Parliament, on 6 June, the Supreme Court, comprising three senior judges, made an interim injunction restraining the Speaker from appointing a Parliamentary Select Committee to investigate the allegations against the Chief Justice until the final determination of three Fundamental Rights applications.

The order restrained the Speaker Anura Bandaranaike from appointing a Parliamentary select Committee in terms of Standing Order 78A of the Standing Orders of the Parliament to investigate and report to the parliament on allegations against the Chief Justice that may be set out in a resolution for the presentation of an address of Parliament for the removal of the Chief Justice from office, until the final determination of the application.

In three actions filed by three law-

yers, D.P. Mendis PC, M.M. Zuhair PC and H.K. Chandrasiri, they petitioned the Court for a court declaration that there was an infringement of their fundamental rights guaranteed to them under the Constitution.

President's Counsel, Faiz Musthapha submitted that the appointment of a Parliamentary Select Committee to investigate allegations against the high officials of the judiciary was a severe encroachment of the independence of the judiciary. In such instance the MPs will be the complainants, prosecutors and the judges which constituted a clear violation of the principles of natural justice. He further submitted that such inquiries should be made by persons who are competent and experienced and not by parliamentary select committees.

In granting the restraining order and fixing the next date of hearing of the full case for 3 September, the Court said, "We have given our careful consideration to the submissions of counsel for the petitioners and the pleadings filed by the petitioners in these three applications. Upon a consideration of the material placed before this Court and the submissions of the learned counsel it would appear that the matter raised by counsel for the petitioners involved the purported exercise of judicial power by the legislature. This question in our view is of paramount importance which is fit and proper for review by the Supreme Court."

The Court order incensed the promoters of the motion to impeach the Chief Justice. MPs belonging mainly to the opposition UNP raised the issue in Parliament denouncing the Court's action as an attack on the supremacy of Parliament. Citing the relevant Articles from the Constitution, Opposition Leader, Mr. Wickremesinghe stated that judicial power of the people shall be exercised by Parliament through Courts, tribunals and institutions created and established or recognised by the Constitution or created and established by law, except in regard to matters relating to the privileges, immunities and powers of Parliament and of its members, wherein the judicial power of the people may be exercised directly by Parliament according to law.

The motion backed by the support of 77 opposition legislators and pre-

sented to the Speaker called for the removal of the Chief Justice Sarath Silva on fourteen grounds including abuse of power and personal misconduct.

Leader of the House Minister, Richard Pathirana said that the Speaker could not take an arbitrary decision on this matter but should abide by the Supreme Court order. If not this will create a precedent where the Speaker can disregard all the Court orders. The cases against the Chief Justice filed by Ravaya Editor Victor Ivan are still pending which precludes the motion being debated, he said.

The Speaker Anura Bandaranaike said that he was confronted with a serious situation, which was unprecedented in the history of Parliament. He would give his ruling on whether he would abide by the court order or not in due course. It is speculated that the Speaker will announce his ruling on 20 June, rejecting the order of the Supreme Court staying him from appointing a Select Committee to probe the motion against the Chief Justice. However, reports from Colombo state that the Speaker may make some reference in his order to the fact that as much as the way the Standing Orders of Parliament are presently constituted binds him to hold with the supremacy of Parliament over the Judiciary in the way it conducts its own business, he would prefer amendments to the Standing Orders to prevent members of the judiciary being investigated and tried by legislators. The Speaker's ruling would also mean that he would be rejecting a motion handed over to him by 111 Government MPs requesting him not to accept the opposition impeachment motion against the Chief Justice.

● Protest Against Janaka Perera

The appointment of retired Maj. Gen. Janaka Perera as Sri Lanka's High Commissioner in Australia has developed into a major campaigning controversy. Expatriate Sri Lankan Tamils belonging to the Australian Federation of Tamil Associations (AFTA) have launched a campaign against Gen. Perera's appointment accusing him of committing human rights violations while he was serving in the Sri Lankan army. Hundreds of Tamil residents in Australia have protested outside the Sri

Lankan embassy in Canberra and outside the Federal Parliament building demanding that the General's appointment be withdrawn. However, Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer has told the Federal Parliament that Australia had investigated the allegations but found no incriminating evidence against the ex-Army officer. "As a senior commander in the Sri Lankan army, his nomination was bound to attract criticism from those on the other side of the conflict," a spokesman from the Australian Foreign Ministry said on customary condition of anonymity.

But Tamil groups said that Downer's approval of the new High Commissioner was tantamount to endorsing atrocities committed by the Sri Lankan security forces.

It is learnt that Amnesty International had, on hearing about Janaka Perera's potential appointment as High Commissioner in Australia, had warned the Sri Lankan government about complaints of human rights violations it had received against Janaka Perera. Commentators in Colombo consider his appointment as a "grave mistake" on the part of the government.

While he was serving in the army, Janaka Perera had a reputation of being an "efficient General" with a "hawkish approach" in combating the Tamil Tigers on the battle front. But he was also suspected of having his own agenda, political ambitions and of being an ally of the opposition United National Party, and therefore seen as posing a major threat. Hence he was forced into a situation in which he secured premature retirement from the army. His appointment abroad in a diplomatic post is seen by discerning observers in Colombo as a measure to satisfy him and at the same time keep him out of the island.

"If the government wanted to ensure that he was out of the country, the best place for him would have been Islamabad where he would have been more comfortable in the company of the Pakistani military ruler, General Musharraf than in Canberra," one observer said.

● No Confidence Motion

Whatever the Speaker's ruling on the tussle between the Supreme Court and the Parliament it would only add



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to the constitutional confusion and whip up the opposition to topple the Government. The Opposition's main charges against the Government are: Incapacity to wage the war effectively or to conduct the peace talks properly; inability to contain the cost of living by managing the economy prudently, and failure to raise the salary of government servants.

Opposition is united except for the lone Sihala Urumaya vote. It is thus assured of 107 votes (UNP 88, JVP 10, TULF 5, TELO 3 and Tamil Congress 1) in the 225-member parliament. Opposition needs 6 MPs to defeat the Government. The Government should keep its entire flock with it for it to survive. UNP leadership is concentrating on drawing to its side the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) which has 4 members, and Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) which has 11 MPs and the disgruntled section of the Government.

President Kumaratunga has managed the CWC by writing off part of the interest and rescheduling the payment of the Rs. 32 million Bank of

Ceylon loan it obtained in 1994 to complete its headquarters. She is currently trying to manage the SLMC whose leader, Rauf Hakeem, has of late developed a habit of blowing hot and cold at the same time. The way he conducts his himself leaves room to wonder whether he understands the concept of collective responsibility as a Minister. While being in the cabinet, he is known to have had negotiations with the opposition as to whether his party should, and on what terms, vote to bring down the government by voting for the opposition inspired no-confidence motion. Recently at a press conference, he is quoted as saying that he could be 'persuaded' on the matter of the no-confidence motion 'by either side' implying that he might side with either the PA or even the UNP.

But at the same time he says, "Though the SLMC is disillusioned, I had made it clear to the President that the party will not be a threat to her government. Certain Cabinet colleagues are trying to create problems between the People's Alliance and the SLMC, but

we would like to see the President as an astute and a minority-friendly leader."

There is an ongoing factional fight within the SLMC between Rauf Hakeem and Mrs Ferial Ashraff, the widow of the late leader of the party. While Hakeem give indications that he has fallen for the inducements offered by the UNP leader and wants the SLMC to sever its links with the government and join the opposition in bringing down the government, Mrs Ferial's faction has decided to stay with the Government. Though Ferial has only two MPs on her side many of the seven MPs on Hakeem's side too are reluctant to quit the Government. Specially so are the three deputy ministers. Last week Hakeem summoned them to his residence and suggested that they resign en bloc. The deputy ministers asked for time and have not replied so far.

SLMC politbureau met on June 14 but adjourned without taking any decision. At that meeting the members who are not in parliament pressed for a de-

(continued on next page)

Confronting the Problems in the Peace Process

Dr Jehan Perera

The insistence by the LTTE that its proscription in Sri Lanka should be lifted as a 'pre-requisite' to enter peace talks, and the government's refusal to accede to this demand have no doubt stalled the peace process, at least hopefully, for the time being. In refusing the LTTE's demand, the government's response has been to say that the lifting of the ban would be an outcome of the peace talks, and not something that can happen prior to the talks. Whether the government should have issued a public statement on the matter is debatable. It might have been better if the government had pursued the matter more discreetly through the Norwegian facilitators and other foreign governments.

It is unlikely that the international community, among others, would condone pre-conditions being imposed on what were believed to be unconditional talks. Nevertheless, the phrasing of the government's statement does not close the door to a package deal that might yet be put together to break the deadlock. There was, after all, a time when the government insisted that the LTTE should give up its Eelam demand and

surrender arms for peace talks with it to commence. The government no longer puts these forward as pre-conditions, or "pre-requisites" to use the LTTE vocabulary.

Sections of the media and Sinhalese groups are urging the government to re-introduce those two original pre-conditions of its own to match those of the LTTE. The government's Tamil ally in Parliament, the EPDP, has asked that the highway to Jaffna be opened by the LTTE prior to peace talks. While such equivalent and a tit-for-tat responses might seem to even the scales, they would do little or nothing to promote the peace process. It is unlikely that such a stance would hasten the government and LTTE to the negotiating table that is the most urgently need at this time. Until a mutually agreed ceasefire is arrived at, the ominous possibility exists of military action by either side that can ruin the relatively congenial environment that exists at present for peace talks to commence.

In thinking of how a breakthrough in the peace process may take place, it is worth contrasting the government's

present reactive and negative stance towards the peace process with that of India in relation to its Kashmir problem. Six months ago the Indian government sought to break the deadlock in its fight against the Kashmiri militant organisations by declaring an unilateral ceasefire. This was a positive action which, it was hoped, would lead to an improvement in the possibility of a negotiated peace. However, when its unilateral ceasefire went by and large unreciprocated, the Indian government did not go back to its original position and its implication of endless war. Instead it took yet another positive action. It recently offered direct talks with the Pakistani government. Now the Kashmiri militant organisations that spurned the Indian government's unilateral ceasefire are complaining that they might get marginalised in the government to government negotiations that will take place.

Pragmatic Reasons

The Sri Lankan government should consider emulating the Indian government when it comes to taking positive political initiatives, instead of merely reacting to its opponent's demands and getting stuck in one place. The future of peace talks will continue to be bleak if both the government and LTTE continue to stick to their positions or revert to old pre-conditions. But there remain strong pressures on them to be more flexible, not least from the war weary population that no longer wishes to be embroiled in a seemingly endless war, the benefit of which does not accrue to them. Ultimately, it is likely that the government will be more responsive to the pressures that are being brought to bear on it. Unlike the LTTE, the government is a democratic entity fettered by politics and has to act accordingly.

There are two very pragmatic reasons why the government should not remain stuck with its position that it will not lift the ban on the LTTE prior to the commencement of the talks. First is the fact that the talks have already commenced, even though they are not face to face. The two sides are indisputably talking to each other through the Norwegian facilitator. It is due to these talks that the Norwegians have come very close to formulating a mutually agreeable Memorandum of Understanding on various important matters. Therefore there is no principled need for the government to delay its lifting of the ban

(Continued from page 9)

cision to quit the Government while the deputy ministers and MPs want to continue in Government. President Kumaratunga announced that Kalmunai would be upgraded to an Urban Council, a sop sufficient to help the SLMC to stick to the Government. SLMC's main demand, the creation of Kalmunai district would not be granted, mainly due to Sinhalese agitation against it. But Tamil opposition would be cited as the reason for the Government's inability to grant the SLMC demand.

The President had also reprimanded S. B. Dissanayake for his June 12 outburst at Kurunegala against the SLMC. He said: We cannot create separate districts on the basis of race, religion, caste and other considerations. We must push aside such fundamentalist elements and form a national government with the aid of patriotic sections

of the country.

President Kumaratunga warned him in the presence of the Prime Minister to be more responsible in what he said. That was after UNP shot down the National Government proposal.

The situation is dicey for the Government and the country. As the peace process remains almost in limbo, there are rumours in Colombo and Jaffna about an impending military clash in the Jaffna peninsula. LTTE's Voice of Tigers announced in its news broadcast on June 13 that a combined army, navy, air force practice for the attack was on in the Palaly military complex. With reports that the LTTE has received fresh sophisticated military supplies, the prospect of a renewed fierce military clash cannot be ruled out. The Government's primary concern at present would be its survival by defeating the no-confidence motion. □

until face to face talks commence.

Besides, there is reason to believe that the LTTE's refusal to be flexible on its pre-requisites has a larger political motivation behind it. There is no denying the present PA government has been the most formidable foe of the LTTE. In its six years in office it turned the tables on the LTTE.

The PA government greatly escalated the costs of war to both the Tamil people and the entire country. But it also succeeded in effectively ousting the LTTE from the Jaffna peninsula. The government also succeeded in turning around international opinion that was once strongly sympathetic to the Tamil cause and to the LTTE that was seen as leading its just struggle. Instead the government has been able to project the difficulties of a democratic government struggling against political odds to satisfy the aspirations of a powerful ethnic minority.

Seeking a compromise formula

Due to these two major military and political defeats at the hands of the PA government, it seems that the LTTE would prefer to deal with a non-PA government. This may partly account for the LTTE's decision to delay the peace process through its three pre-requisites. The perception of a deadlock could be used by political opponents of the government to promote the impending parliamentary vote of no-confidence against the government. For the no-confidence motion to be successful the support of the Tamil parties in Parliament will be necessary. One effective way for the government to take counter-measures against this plan would be to ensure that the peace talks commence as speedily as possible. Those who are sponsoring the no-confidence motion against the government are promising that they will form a government of national reconciliation. But there are several problems with this plan. The government will still be under President Chandrika Kumaratunga who will continue to wield the enormous powers of the executive presidency and continue to be a formidable political opponent.

Further, the new government will presumably comprise parties as divergent as the UNP and JVP who have little or nothing in common on either economic policy or the ethnic conflict. It can be expected that such a heterogeneous government will not be able to act deci-

sively or prepare a coherent set of principles by which the ethnic conflict can be solved.

Even if peace talks between the new government and LTTE do commence they are likely to soon run aground due to the inability to agree on political principles that would guide the new political order. Despite all its shortcomings, the PA still remains the only Sinhalese-dominated political party that has demonstrated a fundamental commitment to enhanced political autonomy for the north-east over and above that which exists on paper today. The PA has been prepared to frontally challenge those Sinhalese nationalists who oppose such political autonomy in a manner that no other party of substance has. This is the great strength that must not be lost at this crucial stage when the possibility of the commencement of peace talks with the LTTE are so real. The government needs to find a compromise formula by which the LTTE's three pre-requisites are satisfactorily met, and the LTTE's own commitment to a just political solution is put to the test at the negotiating table.

Now that the issue of the ban on the LTTE appears to have been given pride of place in the calculations of the two parties it is necessary that a compromise should be reached on it. Peace organisations in the country have been trying to suggest obvious compromises to these two positions, but have generally focused more on the government urging it to concede to the LTTE's position. They are acutely conscious that the government curtly dismissed the LTTE's earlier four month long ceasefire and gave it nothing in return. They feel that it is now the turn of the government to give the LTTE something. A reasonable proposal is that the government should agree in advance to lift the ban on the LTTE for the duration of the peace talks.

Peace Process and No-confidence Motion

There still appears to be little prospect for a quick breakthrough to face-to-face peace talks between the government and LTTE. So far both sides seem content to keep the present stalemate going for some more time. Queries have been raised whether either of them is prepared for the negotiations. While the government has its draft constitution proposals, including the devolution package, the LTTE has completely re-

jected them in the past. Nor has it come up with a framework proposal of its own. In such a situation, it makes sense that the two parties should not be overly hasty in meeting face to face.

A second reason for the two sides to be unwilling to take firm steps to break the present deadlock is the impending no-confidence motion against the government in Parliament. The LTTE's conduct, especially at election time over the past few years, has revealed that it would prefer to deal with a non-PA new government. A few weeks ago the pro-LTTE Tamil Guardian newspaper published in London berated the TULF for not being enthusiastic in supporting the no-confidence motion against the government. Therefore, it is unlikely that the LTTE would engage in any actions that might help the government ward off the opposition's no-confidence threat to it.

In this situation, it makes little sense for the government to make any politically significant concessions to the LTTE until the issue of the no-confidence motion has been resolved one way or the other. The government might suspect that the LTTE is likely to make some other demand of the government to delay the peace process until the no-confidence motion is approved. It is also aware that the international community is getting impatient with the delay in the peace process. This may account for the government's surprise lifting of the censorship on war reporting which can only be seen as a goodwill gesture. While this action reflected well on the government's willingness to follow democratic norms, and make itself more internationally acceptable, it gave nothing away to the LTTE.

Accordingly, one of the causes for the present stalemate in the peace process would be the no-confidence motion proposed by the opposition. It is a singularly ill-timed venture to those interested in promoting the peace process, especially as it seems to have the ability to extend in time to several months. This is not surprising as many of those in the forefront of activism concerning the no-confidence motion are those with a Sinhalese nationalist orientation. Those sections of the UNP and JVP who are the driving force behind the no-confidence motion have never been proponents of devolution, inter-ethnic power-sharing or Tamil rights.

The no-confidence motion also appears to be ill-timed in relation to its like-

lihood of success. Constitutional coups have a better chance for success if there is a popular groundswell of support for them and opposition to the government. But of this there is little evidence. On the contrary, a recent opinion poll conducted by the University of Colombo's Centre for Social and Anthropological Studies under the supervision of Prof. S.T. Hettige has revealed that the government still retains the confidence of a majority of the people as being the best suited to end the ethnic conflict.

Delivering Promises

Whatever may be the larger politics of the peace process, however, it is necessary that the government and LTTE should be thinking beyond the present impasse. It is likely that once the problem of the no-confidence motion is resolved, a way out of the present stalemate can be worked out. The LTTE will have a major role to play in breaking the stalemate. It needs to think pragmatically about the political process in the longer term in order to best ensure that devolution, inter-ethnic power-sharing and Tamil rights are to be secured in the country.

In a situation of bargaining in the marketplace, where only a one time transaction with the other is envisaged, it is preferable to bargain with a weaker opponent. It is then possible to beat down the other to get a good deal for oneself and walk away with personal satisfaction. But where ongoing relationships are concerned, sustaining the agreement also is a matter of concern. The objective of such negotiations is generally not to come out on top, but to reach a balanced agreement that seems fair to both parties.

In the short term the LTTE's interests might be met if a new UNP-JVP led coalition government replaces the present PA government. But the new government would necessarily be a weak one, torn between opposing ideological tendencies. It is unlikely that the opposition coalition would be able to form a government that is able to deliver on its promises that are presently made by the UNP to entice the Tamil parties to vote for the no-confidence motion. Negotiating a solution to the ethnic conflict is not simply a matter of bartering this for that. It is also a matter of carrying the majority of people in the country along with the solution.

It is only a strong government with

a strong leadership that can deliver on promises made and agreements reached and ensure that they are implemented. The same logic applies to the government and its own efforts to weaken the LTTE prior to the commencement of peace talks. It is only a strong LTTE that can convince its rank and file to give up their military struggle and go along with a political solution and the necessary compromises that will have to be made along the way.

Overcoming the past

The LTTE appears to be deeply unhappy about the attitude of the international community at the present juncture. From the LTTE's point of view it has been they who have been demonstrating commitment and sacrifice for the sake of the peace process. Commencing with the LTTE leader Prabhakaran's Heroes' day speech last November to the LTTE's four month long unilateral ceasefire, it has been the LTTE that has shown a decisive shift of strategy. But all of this has been too little or of no avail. It is noticeable that many in the diplomatic community in Sri Lanka do not seem very sympathetic to the LTTE's position on its pre-requisites.

The overwhelming problem for the LTTE, and one that is difficult for them to overcome, is the lack of faith in the LTTE's ability to really change from a war machine to a political entity. There is a suspicion that its change of strategy may not reflect a real change of heart, especially when it is the same leadership that has been in charge all these years. The LTTE leadership is the same one that assassinated the Mayor of Jaffna in 1975, that shot over a hundred Buddhist pilgrims in 1985, that killed many Tamil political leaders, that assassinated Rajiv Gandhi and former President Premadasa and many others, that brought down the Central Bank in 1996 and assassinated the international human rights activist Dr Neelan Tiruchelvam in 1999.

By way of contrast, the Sri Lankan state has the tremendous advantage that its leadership is a constantly changing one. The Sri Lankan government leadership that fanned the flames of the anti-Tamil pogrom of 1983 and which brutally crushed the JVP insurrection of 1988-89 is no more. The fact that memories die hard can be seen in the difficulties that the remaining leadership of the UNP government has in getting people to forget that past. Once a leadership has

got tarnished it is difficult to remove the tarnish. But with every change of government there is a change of faces and new hope arises and old prejudices are put aside.

To make matters more difficult for the LTTE some of its continuing actions re-invoke its past practices. The continuous LTTE killings of impoverished Sinhalese villagers in the contested areas adjoining the northern and eastern provinces is a notable example. It has been argued that the settlement of Sinhalese in these areas by successive governments has been a part of the war. But when the LTTE cadre just walk in and cold bloodedly kills Sinhalese villagers whenever they feel like it, the abiding image of the LTTE as essentially terrorist is reinforced.

The killing of two middle aged women in Arantalawa a few days ago by the LTTE for no reason other than they were Sinhalese will surely terrify the rest of the Sinhalese villagers and motivate them to flee their settlements. But it will also reinforce the belief that the LTTE is indeed an organisation that the Sri Lankan government could legitimately ban until the LTTE renounces such practices at the negotiating table. In this time of stalemate on the peace process, it would be more pragmatic for the LTTE to find ways to impress upon the general public and international community that it is serious about charting a new path to peace.

In this interim period, and until face-to-face talks commence, perhaps the LTTE should find a way to match the government's unexpected goodwill generating action of lifting the censorship on war-related news.

Norwegian Role

The upgrading of Norwegian representation in the peace process at the request of the Sri Lankan government and the apparent downgrading of the role of its present peace envoy Erik Solheim could become a setback to the peace process. Anti-government propagandists could attempt to make out that Sinhalese nationalist elements within the government and society have gained the upper hand in their efforts to scuttle the peace process. Almost from the inception of the Norwegian facilitated peace process, the Norwegian peace envoy was one of the main targets of Sinhalese nationalist wrath. Even his personal life and character were not spared, with unkind ref-

erences made even in Parliament. But whatever may be the reason that kept him out of the discussion that President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar had with the visiting Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorbjørn Jagland, the loss of Mr Solheim's 15 months of experience of shuttle diplomacy would constitute yet another delay to the peace process.

During the heyday of his facilitation effort, Mr Solheim shuttled between Oslo, Colombo, London, Delhi and the Wanni on a regular basis meeting with all the key actors to the conflict. Relation-building is a time consuming matter. Besides Mr Solheim took risks with his life, especially on the journeys to the Wanni. On his last journey to the Wanni a landmine was discovered on the route that he was about to travel a few hours before he passed that point.

While the erstwhile peace envoy was often criticised for his readiness to speak his mind on the latest developments in the peace process, especially to the local and international media, there was a positive aspect to it. By his readiness to answer questions put to him in public by his supporters and detractors alike he helped to entrench the conviction that an international third party was necessary for the Sri Lankan parties in conflict to resolve the ethnic conflict.

The zero profile facilitative role that Norway played in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process has been contrasted with the more high profile Norwegian role in Sri Lanka. The difference is that in the Israeli-Palestinian case, the Norwegians began their facilitative role in secret. This was not the case in Sri Lanka. President Kumaratunga's public invitation to the Norwegian government to facilitate in the Sri Lankan peace process ended the long-standing opposition of the Sri Lankan government to foreign facilitation.

Again, in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there was no objection to foreign facilitation on the part of either of the two parties to the conflict. This was unlike in Sri Lanka, where foreign facilitation was rejected by the Sri Lankan government for many years.

Therefore, the acceptance of the need for an external third party to help resolve the conflict needed to percolate through society. By his high profile facilitation, Erik Solheim paved the way for the generality of Sri Lankan society to accept the need for foreign facilitation.

Government Objections

It is believed that the Sri Lankan gov-

ernment was unhappy with Mr Solheim's comments following its abortive military assault on LTTE positions in the Jaffna peninsula in April. Thereafter, when the issue of the LTTE's pre-requisites for peace talks to commence became an obstacle to the peace process, he went to the United States where he is believed to have lobbied with the US government to pressurise the Sri Lankan government to lift its ban on the LTTE.

From the viewpoint of the Sri Lankan government, these actions seem to have exceeded the scope of his mandate. Nevertheless it is a pity that a peace envoy with the energy and commitment of Erik Solheim should be downgraded from the peace process.

The LTTE has reacted strongly to the possibility of Mr Solheim's downgrading and have expressed their unhappiness to the Norwegian government, even claiming that the peace process is on the verge of breakdown. They have seen Mr Solheim's apparent displacement, which he has denied, as a sign of unilateral decision making regarding the peace process by the Sri Lankan government in which the Norwegians have acquiesced. However, it should be noted that the government's agreement was that Norway should play the facilitative role, and not Mr Solheim. It can be expected that if the government should have lost faith in him, for whatever reason, it should ask for someone else in his place. But if that is so, the same logic will apply to the LTTE as well. The danger is that they too will start to object to individuals involved in the facilitation process.

On the one hand, it is of the utmost importance that the government and LTTE should retain their confidence in the impartiality of Norway as a third party. On the other hand, both these parties have to be reasonable in the leeway they give the third party to form its own judgements as to what is best to take the peace process forward. Fortunately, it appears that though the government may have problems with Mr Solheim, it retains faith in Norway. The LTTE retains its faith in Norway and also in Mr Solheim. The decision of the Norwegian government to upgrade its representation in the peace process may be a means by which both government and LTTE interests are met.

The need for trust

For any peace process to take effect there has to be trust. Without trust there cannot be an agreement. This is true even

of agreements between individuals. It is well known that there is no trust between the government and LTTE, nor is it likely that there will be any trust in the foreseeable future. The only way in which trust can enter into the peace process is via the third party. In the context of the Sri Lankan peace process, this means that the government and LTTE who do not trust each other, need to trust the Norwegians.

By the government and LTTE separately trusting the Norwegian third party, trust can enter the system of negotiations.

In an interview with the internet news service, Lanka Academic, Erik Solheim strongly rejected allegations by Sri Lankan and foreign media that he had been sidelined. "I can confirm that while the Foreign Minister and the deputy Minister will be involved at a high-level, myself and Sri Lanka's Norway envoy Mr. Westborg will continue to act as the facilitating team", he is reported to have said. However, it is likely that a new peace envoy will be coming to Sri Lanka to build up trust with the Sri Lankan government. Most Sri Lankans will probably see the announcement by the Norwegian Foreign Minister of the upgrading of peace efforts as a positive feature.

The tough stance taken by the government with regard to Mr Solheim may also motivate it to offer a concession elsewhere. At present the primary stumbling block to the commencement of peace talks appears to be the LTTE's insistence on being de-proscribed by the Sri Lankan government. Last week a group of 31 NGOs and civic organisations which have received government funds for peace work met with the media at a media conference. The invitation for the event was sent out by the government's information department. The main message to emerge from the media conference was that the civic groups were in favour of the government lifting the ban on the LTTE in order for peace talks to commence without delay.

Given the government hand behind the organisation of this media conference, it can be believed that the government, or at least a powerful section within it, are either in favour of lifting the ban or are using the civic groups to test the waters. Despite the vicissitudes of the facilitator, on the government side there appears to be an impetus for peace talks to begin. Erik Solheim may have an important role to play in persuading the LTTE not to dig in its heels if and when the government makes its concession to the peace process. □

Dangers of ethnic and religious hatred

Cat's Eye

The UN has declared 2001 the international year of ACTION for the elimination of race and related forms of discrimination and intolerance, including ethnic and religious forms of discrimination and intolerance. The UN World Conference against Racism will be held in South Africa in the first week of September 2001. At the conference the global community will focus on the causes and consequences of racism and on developing practical strategies to combat forms of discrimination.

Mawanella

It is especially disturbing that the attack on several members of the Muslim minority community in Mawanella and the counter attacks on the Sinhala community happened in this year, and

3 days before Vesak. The events in Mawanella seem to reflect a pattern of political complicity in ethnic disturbances and the further pattern of police complicity in instances of riots which develop out of hate speech and action directed at a minority community by a few individuals or a gang. The lack of police action and the fact that the gangs associated with the original attackers are associated with an MP from the government (arguably the reason for police inaction vis-a-vis the long standing practice of a politician's gang obtaining kappan or protection money), reflects an even more disturbing pattern. It implies that segments of the national government, at the highest levels are implicated in the sanctioning and incitement of attacks explicitly targeted at an ethnic minority community.

Pogrom of 1983

The pattern of politicians being complicit in ethnic riots and the incitement to ethnic, racial, and religious hatred goes back to the anti-Tamil riots of July 1983, which marked the beginning of a full fledged armed conflict in Sri Lanka. A number of social scientists who have studied the violent events of 1983 have concluded that the disturbances amounted to a pogrom (Michael Roberts, Serena Tennekoon, Newton Gunasinghe, Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake). These social scientists have termed the events of 1983 a pogrom and not "riots," in order to point to State involvement and complicity in the organized burning, looting and murder of Tamil minority people and their property.

Social scientists who have studied the political economy of violence in the 1983 riots have noted that the attacks had a pattern of intentional, organized, and systematic destruction of ethnic minority economies and trading practices. The Muslims are historically a trading community in Sri Lanka. The attack seems to have the deliberate purpose of eliminating Muslim businesses

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and trading partnerships and establishing Sinhala ascendancy in the local economy. This in turn enables businessmen to fund politicians who further their business interests. Hate speech and violence against minorities has a clear economic agenda accomplished by politics of jealousy and ethnic competition. This agenda is currently being propagated by some Sinhala groups, just as sections of the government did against the Tamils in months before the pogrom of July 1983, and even before, during the Sinhala Muslim riots of 1915. Some Sinhala majoritarian groups have been advocating the boycott of Muslim shops. This pattern of anti-Muslim sentiment found concrete expression in the attacks at Mawanella.

Political economy of riots

Cumulatively the events in Mawanella are part of a wider pattern that social scientists term the political economy of riots. The clear pattern is that petty traders of the majority community of the area benefit from the violence with the tacit support of politicians who act as patrons for gangs, as well as police officers who are remiss in performing their duties. This pattern of patronage politics in the incitement to ethnic and religious hatred must be arrested. The pattern of political peddling of ethnic hate speech by some members of the governing party and indeed the government for short term political gain that is in the long term destructive of the national peace, economy, and the multi-cultural fabric of society in Sri Lanka must be arrested.

It is not enough to pay compensation to the victims of both communities given tit-for-tat attacks where both Sinhalas and Muslims lost. The perpetrators of the violence must be identified at the highest levels. We are worried that Muslim youth, like the Tamil youth who joined the LTTE in the wake of the July 1983 attacks, might have recourse to guns, given a sense that the law and order institutions of the country work against them in an ethnically biased manner rather than impartially. We are concerned that the south of Sri Lanka might become another Bosnia with ethnic cleansing of the minorities, as has unfortunately also occurred in Jaffna upon LTTE instigation during the two decades of armed conflict in

the north. This process must be reversed with compensation of the victims. An inquiry into the events of July 1983 which marked the worst riots in the country and triggered a full-fledged armed conflict in Sri Lanka was never held. The perpetrators of the violence were never identified and punished. There was ample evidence of ministerial level support for the riots of July 1983 including UNP trade unions. This pattern seems to be recurrent regardless of the political party in power. The lack of punishment has provided a precedent for this pattern of certain politicians acting with impunity and the law and order mechanisms of the state being misused.

A model Code of Conduct

The UN draft declaration and program for action of the World Conference on Racism and related forms of intolerance including ethnic and religious intolerance, as well as the regional prep-com meeting for Asia and the Pacific noted the need for "a model code of conduct to be developed for political parties so that their members refrain from public utterances that would encourage racism and racist sentiment among the public." The events in Mawanella clearly indicate the need for such a code of conduct for politicians and political parties in Sri Lanka. We suggest that the Sri Lanka government commit itself to abide by this recommendation. A code of conduct might also be necessary also for some leaders of the religious communities who have displayed a dismaying tendency to propagate ethnic stereotypes and even sometimes indulge in hate speech against members of other religious communities, rather than preaching civil peace and communal harmony.

A National Commission

In the context what is needed is a national commission on race, ethnic, caste, religious discrimination and for the promotion of equality and multi-culturalism. The Equal opportunities Bill aimed at enabling ethnic equality and promoting multi-culturalism was stymied in 2000. Setting up a commission might be a more gradual and democratic process towards achieving the similar yet broader goals of race/ethnic/caste/religious/linguistic equality. Moreover after more than 20 years of

armed conflict in the island, together with economic restructuring associated with the globalization has generated new forms of exclusion and resulted in complex patterns of discrimination and Americanization experienced by a number of ethnic, religious and caste groups and communities. A commission would deal with the intersection of forms of marginalization and exclusion.

Value of Diversity

While it is important that ALL cultures be enabled to flourish, minority communities are especially vulnerable to being colonized by majority cultures. Majoritarianism - the principle that might is right has never been a sign of civilization. Civilization is about the protection of the vulnerable, the numerically and politically weak, be they segments of the dominant communities and/or various caste groups. A second argument against majoritarianism is that a majority in one part of this island might be a minority in another part. Sri Lanka is an ancient multi-ethnic, multi-faith and multi-cultural land. As the same UN draft declaration for the World conference against racism notes: "For too long diversity has been treated as a threat rather than a gift and too often that threat has been expressed in racial contempt and conflict, in exclusion, discrimination and intolerance... We must understand that intolerance and racial discrimination breed and fester in inequitable political, economic and social conditions, and that genuine equality of opportunity for development is fundamental to the eradication of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. We therefore call for urgent national, regional and international measures to provide the chance for a decent life for all the peoples of the world in their magnificent diversity."

Suggestions

The immediate areas for action to prevent a further deterioration of the situation would be: Developing and implementing a code of conduct for politicians and political parties; Drafting a bill on the prevention of hate speech, the incitement to race, ethnic, caste and other forms of hatred; and Multi-cultural educational policies including minority history while should be part of national history. □

Mafia Mayhem in Mawanella

Beware of Manoeuvres to Pass the Buck

Dr. Oswald B. Firth OMI

Director, Centre for Society and Religion

The Aristotelian Legacy

Six centuries into the past, a wise and refined thinker, hailing from the small Greek town of Stagira, made a very incisive and poignant statement when describing human knowledge, that it is a precious commodity that can be garnered only by an assiduous exercise of the mind, that has the power to penetrate the deeper recesses of reality. Knowledge is not a potpourri of information downloaded into a diskette from one's computer through a process of electrosmosis! True knowledge, as the Jesuit jewel Teilhard de Chardin would say, has to do with consciousness, while artificial intelligence could be culled from the internet!

Aristotle's penetrating reflections reveal that we know a thing better when we know 'what it is' (it's 'essential nature'), than when we tinker around with its external appearances that may mislead us into deriving hasty conclusions that may sound oxymoron, or unbelievably true. Aristotle would readily agree that external phenomena do, in fact, have some kind of an existence, which may sometimes tend to cloud the real nature of a thing. But external characteristics may not necessarily reveal the real substance or essential nature of a thing. The true nature of a thing becomes transparent only through a symbiotic relationship with a person's mind. External phenomena can sometimes lead to deceptive judgments. In simple, figurative terms, one should be careful never to lose the wood for the

trees!

Missing the Wood for the Trees

Scrutinizing the "substance" or the "essential nature" of the Mawanella riots in terms of Aristotelian thinking, there have been malicious and calculated attempts to lead the public astray based on external phenomena. President Chandrika Kumaratunga, whose paranoia against her political opponents is legendary, rushed to the television screen to proclaim that the UNP was the bogey behind the black fumes that gutted Mawanella on those days of ignominy that preceded Vesak, the very acme and epitome of loving kindness and non-violence.

The Deputy Defence Minister, General Anuruddha Ratwatte, found a well tamed scapegoat on which he was ready to heap all the sins of Mawanella. There had been "security lapses on the part of the police", lamented Deputy Minister Ratwatte. The police was singled out to appear the villain of the piece. Ordering the interdiction of three homeguards and one junior police officer, and the transfer of the area OIC and ASP were crude attempts to scuttle the truth. All this is reminiscent of how the very same General unconscionably covered up his election malpractices and thuggery perpetrated by his progeny not, so long ago, in the Kandy District. Fortunately, the public is not gifted with his penchant to apportion the entire blame on the police as if it alone was guilty of any dereliction of

duty. There is a limit beyond which civil society will not succumb to such puerile panjandrums on the part of the General, having once before being deceived into believing that the security forces had successfully won 95 per cent of the North-East war!

The seemingly studied vacillation of Minister Rauf Hakeem, whose 'hundred day' challenges thrown at the President are quaint and rib-tickling manoeuvres, combined with his politically motivated manipulations to remain in power at any cost, gave the Mawanella incidents a racist twist with volatile undertones. He was well aware that this form of brinkmanship though dangerous may go down well emotionally with his beleaguered community. Commenting on the nefarious events at Mawanella, Minister Hakeem claimed that a systematic attack was aimed at the Muslims of this country. There is here an unusual twist of logic. On the one hand he belches out accusations of racial persecution against his community, while on the other he soft-pedals these allegations and adroitly dilutes his arguments by saying that whenever the two races flared up these occurrences always ended in amicable settlements. If so, why all the fuss about racial persecution?

Either Minister Hakeem is fully convinced that the true nature of the Mawanella mayhem had its origins in racial hatred, or he is shrewdly concealing the truth for reasons best known to him.

Fuelling the Racist Syndrome

Minister Hakeem could not have been totally oblivious to the fact that by rousing the inflammatory and contentious racial syndrome he was not only creating an unhealthy climate for a manifestation of violence among Muslims in other parts of the country, which is indeed what happened in Maradana and Kalmunai, albeit in a minuscule scale. But in the process he was also exonerating the real culprits



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who burnt down the Hingula mosque and torched the Ziaram in Ganetenna, reducing to ashes copies of the sacred Koran in these holy places. In contrast, the statement issued by the Muslim community of Mawanella, which was more circumspect, bears witness to the fact that the incidents were not really race-related when they asserted that "...The people (the Muslims) were not giving room to their personal feelings which could have resulted in harming any member of the Sinhala community. A Sinhala wedding taking place on the 2nd of May, at the height of the tension, at the Raliya Reception Hall, owned by a Muslim, and located in a Muslim locality, bears witness to this".

In an attempt to fish in troubled waters, the Sihala Urumaya firebrand and now Member of Parliament, Patali Champika Ranawaka, who perceives every incident in this country with his tinted Sinhala-Buddhist glasses, branded the Mawanella incidents and subsequent events as attempts by the Muslim minority community to persecute the Sinhala majority community. "This is a Sinhala-Buddhist country", ranted Ranawaka; "Other races should learn to live with us" (sic), which when paraphrased means, to submit themselves to a state of abject subservience. He even went on to threaten that more than peaceful agitations would be resorted to in order to establish the will of the majority community. Already there are ominous signs as to what form these 'more than peaceful agitations' may take.

Searching for Root Causes

It is time to penetrate the mass of misinformation that surrounds the mischievous events that sent Mawanella up in flames. The destruction that resulted in the debacle saw the burning of 137 shops, the torching of 39 houses and 23 vehicles, reducing to ashes 2 garment stores, 1 factory and 1 filling station and the desecration of 3 mosques and damage to a Buddha statue. One innocent Muslim street vendor lost his life to a bullet fired by a policeman. It is clear that vital elements that would provide a lead to understanding the real substance or "essential nature" of the Mawanella smash-up have been surreptitiously swept under the carpet by of-

ficialdom, not by an act of omission, but by one of sheer impunity. The President, speaking on the Mawanella incidents blamed her political foes for the inflammatory events, but deliberately omitted to mention the close collusion of the underworld's nefarious Mafia with her own party members who provided a protective cover and immunity to these anti-social and criminal elements. Repayment for helping their political promoters and protectors in order to secure a seat in Parliament came in the form of letting these underworld felons and hoodlums earn their living through extortion (kappam), intimidation, harassment of Muslim shopkeepers and street vendors, humiliation (forcefully removing the head-dress of Muslim maidens), and even physical injuries as was evidently the case on the 1st and 2nd of May. If arrested by the police, these political patrons would make a case that as their proteges have no recorded criminal charges they cannot be kept behind the bars of Bogambara, Welikada or Mahara. The politico alleged to be behind this fracas has already made attempts to absolve himself of any such responsibility with the specious plea that he had not been at the scene when these incidents occurred because he was in distant Male probably shopping for his kith and kin at home! So, he has not been in cahoots or connivance with these lawless elements!

The "heart-of-the-matter" (or the "essential nature of things" in Aristotle's terminology) of what transpired at Mawanella on those fateful days is none other than the gradual take-over of the indiscriminate rule of this country by thugs and underground criminal elements and contract murderers who are

ready to flout every democratic practice and undermine every democratic institution in this country under the protection of their political patrons. Despite compelling evidence to the contrary, acts of criminality committed by political henchmen are outrageously classified as racial riots to whip up racist emotions and to help miscreants dodge punishment for their misdeeds.

Legacy of Non-Violence

Ex-Parliamentarian Vasudeva Nanayakkara, the stalwart of the Left and Democratic Alliance, summed up today's culture of criminality succinctly when he spoke to a hundred participants at a seminar on Good Governance organized by the Centre for Society and Religion. "It is our unfortunate fate that we cannot entirely eliminate political violence in this country", said Mr. Nanayakkara.

"However, let us work together towards reducing the level and volume of such violence. The State is the institutionalised embodiment of organized violence. Those who act against the vested interests of the State will be subjected to the violence of the law. The police, the prison and physical punishment are symbols of that violence today." Continued Mr. Nanayakkara, "Mahatma Gandhi has clearly stated that non-violence does not entail submission. The decisive power behind the cumulative refusal to submit to injustice is the strength that will defeat the forces of State intimidation and persecution". These are the challenges that the aftermath of Mawanella holds out to us.

The writer is also the editor of the "Social Justice", the monthly journal published by the Centre for Society and Religion. □

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JVP: The Past, Present and Future

E. M. G. Edirisinghe

Insurrection in 1971 and terrorism in 1989-90 is the known history of the JVP upto the year 1997. With over 30 years of generally violent politics with much of it underground, the JVP has now entered the mainstream political scene with an impressive show at the last general election thanks to the system of proportional representation. Back door politics which it practised appears to have been shut. It is a good sign. Democracy in this country is thus strengthened and enriched by a new meaning the JVP is adding to the system of Parliamentary democracy.

Now, the JVP seems to be acting with a degree of responsibility which had skipped the minds of the earlier leadership. Even though they are in a position to bring down the provincial administration in some provinces like the WP and the SP they are not inclined politically or morally, to frustrate the will of the majority in the respective provinces. Moreover, they do not want to be accused of toppling an administration elected by the people when they have not been given a mandate to do so.

Presently the JVP act with restraint and self-discipline, even if they are confronted with violence. This was evident at the death of two of their colleagues during the run up to the last elections. They gained only political mileage over the incidents which is common among all the Sri Lankans. The funeral processions though excited but not incited to turn violent. The JVP once advocated a policy of murder, intimidation and other acts of violence as a means to their ends. The present leadership learning from the past failures of the then leadership, have dropped (or suspended!) armed struggle to embrace peaceful co-existence in democracy.

In general, the parties opposed to the JVP assert that they should make a public confession about the crimes the party had committed in the past. However, they admit doing it in the form of self-criticism. The present leadership, nevertheless, is not responsible for the atrocities committed in the past. The proof of themselves being changed is not in the admission of guilt but in their conduct now onwards. To force them to confess is to make them feel guilty and punish them for crimes which they have not committed themselves, and also to give an opportunity to their enemies to throw the confession back on their face whenever they deem it suits them. On the other hand, the present JVP is not the JVP that once engaged in violence. Party means the leaders and the followers and not just a label. Everything changes. Even politics cannot escape the operation of the universal truth of impermanence.

The JVP is against the executive Presidency. But the PA and the UNP along with ethnic minorities are not basically against it. They only propose changes keeping with the spirit of Parliamentary democracy. The JVP reasoning behind this fundamental question is primarily defensive and self-centred. Both PA and the UNP are capable of producing able national leaders with a strong personal and political background to stand a Presidential election whereas the JVP is far behind it. So the JVP stand on this is understandable except if they wish to act as a pressure group like the ethnic or and political minorities are doing today.

Preferential (manape) voting system as practised in the country today, in spite of the advantage it has of helping the ethnic and political minorities to gain some representation reflecting the true ideological and political think-

ing in the country at various levels, it has certainly dehumanised the electoral process where the elector had been distanced from the elected. The contest had become more intense within one's own party than with the opposing party or parties.

The JVP however, has introduced a more humane face to this vexed preferential system of voting as currently in vogue in Sri Lanka. Their appeal is to the intellect and common sense of the people without emphasising the personal factor which is now agonising, egoistic and violent in character. The JVP keeps the voter away from the candidate while every effort is made to get the voter to rally round the party which however much is healthy at the moment, is not beneficial in the long run. The best compromise is to get the voter to mark his preference but to be strict on non-involvement in a "manapapore" which is the ugliest feature of the elections today.

Rohana Wijeweera still carries weight with the pro-JVP vote with his image and dynamic personality still alive in memory. His strong and charismatic leadership quality is hard to match and what spoilt his future was his destructive politics. The inherent desire of the voter to know the MP of his choice remains undiminished. The leadership as well as the membership of a successfully political party should come from diverse social cultural, religious, class and professional backgrounds. A party becomes more colourful, meaningful and vibrant only when it could provide shelter to various shades of opinion and make them into a coherent unit under strong leadership.

The JVP provides a joint-leadership and there is no individual single leader. This too, could be a setback in the long run unless remedied soon. People do not look upon a party to lead but they are enamoured only by a leader and only in an individual leader they repose faith and not in the policies of a party. Joint leadership is inconceivable to the people both for inspiration and to hold responsible. Even the religions with millions of unwavering followers are founded by an individual whose teachings and

preachings take a second place to the image of the founder. The political leadership too, is similar.

The current practice of the JVP to request the voters not to mark their preferences may work well for some-time specially when they do not have individually popular leaders at national and regional level. But, later on it could produce a strongly negative effect. If the JVP is to emerge a major party, their present policy of the party deciding who should be the people's representatives must stop and the people must have the opportunity to choose who should be their leaders. Party substitutes will not hold with the people.

The refusal of the JVP to receive and enjoy many perks available to MPs is something the people would admire as the MPs are well-known not to lose their perks and comforts. It is clearly a populist move but what else the JVP could do when they have got to match their words with deeds. They must show the people that politics is not a business for them. But mostly for everybody actively engaged in politics, politics is certainly business for them whether they are MPs or not.

The Marxist parties generally tend to politicalise every issue whether communal, economic, moral or religious which the people normally do not like. The JVP appears to be following the footsteps of their predecessors. Politics should not enter into every sphere of public life. An overdose of politics is the bane of this country. People hate it. The more you leave out the religion, culture, arts, health, education etc out of stains of politics the better for the country and the people.

No party working out to gain the confidence of the people should even condemn the rich or the capitalist class. The hatred against the rich once sown by the Marxists will never help a party to win an election because the ambition of everyone today is to become rich one day. If one has no financial or intellectual capacity to become rich, he expects at least to win a sweep ticket or get a job in West Asia to become rich.

Presently the JVP is considered a third force with their eyes on power. For a party to capture power which it

failed for 30 years has to work hard. However, the people think its present role is to check and expose the two main parties from moving into excesses and extremes which keeps them watchful and restrained. Beyond that the people have not earmarked the JVP for any other role in the near future. However, as it is being critical of the government, which it has to, in the long run it will help the UNP because the majority will shift the sympathies to the UNP, in case they decide against the government. The people are yet to trust and believe the JVP as a viable alternative government.

The JVP has succeeded in getting even the popularly elected MPs to resign their positions without a fuss or fury. It is exemplary and everyone in the country should learn from this lesson - discipline. Discipline is what we lack at personal, social, and institutional level. As long as they do not have a strong following at personal level, this may be possible but if it grows into a strong people's party it will not be easy, and ruptures could surface. Elections need charismatic popular leaders without whom a victory is impossible.

Elections are never won on policies but on slogans. No political party will ever have unwholesome or unpopular policies. So, on that plane the parties are all alike. So policy statement of a political party hardly carries any weight in an election. A party however, can have only popular or unpopular leaders. That is why nobody reads an election manifesto, nor they vote for it. Any party could have the best possible policies but the people will have faith only on the men behind those policies. If they trust the leaders they will vote for the party even without knowing specially what their policies are. Policies turn sour or sweet only in the hands of the people who administer them. Slogans advanced by the "acceptable" leaders and parties always carry weight (eg. just society, Sinhala only, dushanaya bheeshanaya, etc).

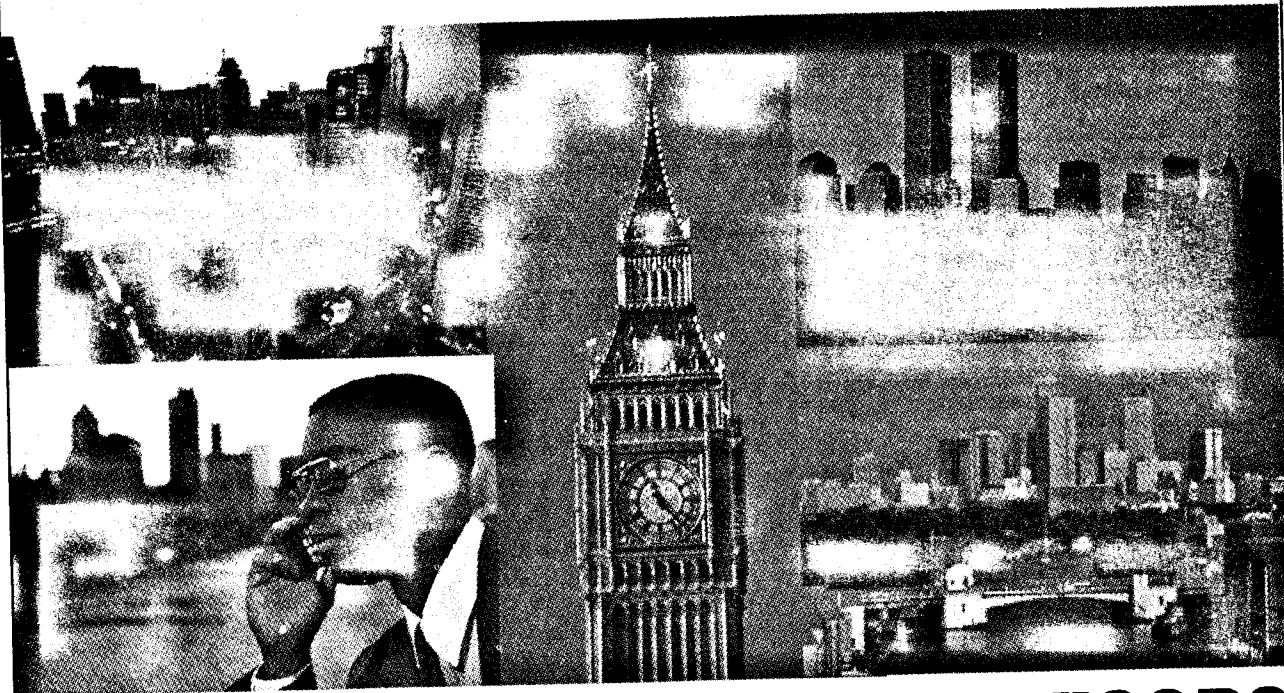
The JVP has projected a very peaceful image to the electorate which has won the acceptance and admiration of the people. This acceptance should elevate the party and the leaders to a level that the people are temperamen-

tally, emotionally and intellectually prepared to accept and trust the JVP with state power. If it fails the party will continue to remain a third force like the LSSP, CP and the MEP until they join hands with the SLFP or the UNP to share power. How long could it stand neutral between the two main parties? Will not their followers remaining loyal to the party for years like to taste power and enjoy the pride and responsibility of holding power. In that event the JVP will be forced to ally with another party or parties to hold reins of government. Politics is not an spiritual exercise but completely a mundane wish aimed at enjoying material benefits.

How far the JVP is tolerant of the opposition is a question it has to answer. Democracy means acceptance of majority will with the minority entitled to a hearing. The JVP in the past has displayed that it did not tolerate dissension and opposition either among its own ranks or from the outsiders. Even now in certain universities where the students unions sympathetic to the JVP are holding office, are reported to have displayed violence against any opposition. This kind of dark shadows haunting the memory of the people should not be allowed to cast themselves before them. The present day JVP in the body of politics is a healed wound. The scar is still there and it should not do anything that would force open it.

Finally, in an attempt to be different from the rest, the JVP should not promise things which are totally impracticable, and the people would not believe them. For instance, they say that poverty should be alleviated by giving every person an equal opportunity and taking away the privileges enjoyed by a few finally leading to equal distribution of wealth and income among all the people. Can they ever do it? In which country out of the 189 members in the UNO, this goal had ever been achieved? No two persons are equal either in body or mind. That is the universal truth and it will remain so for ever. And, at most it must be each according to his ability and nothing more and nothing less. □

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Jaya: Proceeding with Cautious Vengeance

G. Sambedkar, Chennai

Jayalalitha would like to portray herself as a changed personality - no more those cut-outs, no more all that awesome paraphernalia, less of public display of sycophancy from her followers, less hectoring of officials and more courtesy to both allies and the media and so on.

But the revenge spree she has gone on ever since she assumed office as the Chief Minister for the second time in a decade clearly shows that nothing much has changed in her. Whatever has, it is all perhaps cosmetic.

If former Deputy Speaker Parithi Ilam Vazhudhi was the first victim, one after another the opposition bigwigs find themselves behind the bars. As of June 3 speculations centred around the possible arrest of Mayor M.K.Stalin, and of course everything culminating in the detention of Karunanidhi himself.

Events will have come a full circle by then. The lady routed in the elections held only five years ago, sent to prison pending further inquiry in one case and convicted in two other corruption cases, is lording it over all, while the man who sought to eliminate her from public life altogether is now nervously awaiting his turn to go behind the bars. But it could take a while before the climax plotted by Jayalalitha is reached.

That she became the Chief Minister of the state is itself one of the inexplicable mysteries of Indian democracy. Here is a person convicted of corruption charges and disqualified from contesting elections. But her party wins a massive mandate, and the Governor of the state does not bat an eye-lid before swearing in the leader of the victorious alliance as the Chief Minister.

Tamil Nadu Governor Fathima Beevi is a retired judge of the Supreme Court, and so she was expected to have some strong grasp of the constitutional requirements before deciding on invit-

ing anyone to form the government.

The AIADMK had won 132 seats and its MLAs unanimously elected the Puratchi Thalaivi, their leader, and also warned that they would not accept anyone else as the Chief Minister simply because Jayalalitha had been disqualified.

To them Election Commission norms mattered very little. The people's verdict is what counts, for that is god's very own - "Makkal Theerpei Mahesan Theerpu..."

It is true that such a resolution was passed, and Jayalalitha was hinting at triggering off a constitutional crisis if she was not invited to power.

Having said that, was the Governor obliged to accept the majority party's ultimatum even if she might have had her own reservations over the very tenability of Jayalalitha's election? Former union minister P.Chidambaram has no doubt that it was patently unconstitutional. How could a person held disqualified from even contesting an election be made the Chief Minister? he wonders. Besides her continuance in that office is contingent on her getting elected to the Assembly within six months. How does Beevi figure out that the very same Election Commission which barred her from contesting the elections only a month ago would come forward to permit her to contest in the next five months?

Noted journalist Cho Ramaswamy, who has suddenly turned out to be her supporter, argues in turn how could Governor Beevi assume that Jayalalitha would not manage to obtain clearance to contest the elections? She could seek the annulment of the Election Commission norm which prohibits those convicted to two years and more from contesting elections. She could also seek a stay of her conviction. As of now, her prison sentences have been suspended, but her conviction has not been.

Cho's argument is that the Gover-

nor has no right to presume that the conviction too would not be stayed. This often times moralist is silent on the ethics of it all. Where is the question of ethics when you are dealing with a bunch of crooks, such seems to be his contention.

Chidambaram further points out that even charge-sheeted ministers have been asked to step down, as in the case of the AIADMK's very own Sedapatti Muthiah three years ago or, more appropriately, in the case of Laloo Prasad Yadav of Bihar. In the circumstances swearing in someone already convicted is indeed strange, to say the least, he points out.

But Fathima Beevi did not seem to be bothered by any such niceties at all. Two days after the results were announced, the AIADMK MLAs met to elect Jayalalitha as their leader, she rushed straight to the Raj Bhavan armed with the resolution, and that very evening she was sworn in by Beevi. There were some reports to the effect that the Governor had consulted the Attorney General of India, Solil Sorabjee, before choosing to invite Jayalalitha to form the government. But in an unusual move, Sorabjee issued a statement, denying that the Governor had consulted him on the issue.

In fact it all happened lightning quick, there could not have been time at all for any serious discussion. Jayalalitha flares up whenever anyone raises the issue - "Nobody needs to teach Beevi the law. She herself has been a Supreme Court judge. She knows best..."

Whatever Beevi's legal acumen, there is a personal reminiscence, and that would put things in perspective. After retiring from the Supreme Court, she was, for a time, a member of the National Human Rights Commission. The Commission paid a visit to Tamil Nadu in 1994 when the harassment of the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees was at its worst. This writer had then taken a delegation of the affected refugees to the Commission. There were quite a few women in the group. The whole idea was to appeal to the woman, the mother in Beevi, by narrating in detail all the sob stories.

But the 'clever' idea fell flat thanks to Beevi's total callousness. During the hearing, the Commission members did

not seem to be too very impressed by the seriousness of the plight of the refugees. And then the women's brigade took over. They started wailing, just to attract the attention of the members, especially of Beevi who was seated at the right extreme. But nothing seemed to work. She was too busy engrossed in some conversation with a minor official, and a male colleague sitting next to her had to prompt her to the lamentation from the women refugees. Still things did not improve. Beevi did not evince any more interest than the rest or seek to elicit any further information from the refugees. The Commission sitting did not, predictably, come to mean much for the harried refugees. Such is Beevi's concern for people's welfare.

There was another former Supreme Court judge who defended Beevi's action in inviting Jayalalitha to form the government, saying that had she not done so, there would have been blood-bath on the streets of Tamil Nadu and that none would want to be held responsible for such a sorry turn of events. Anyway when the people had voted for a convicted person so massively, what could a poor Governor do? Let the courts decide, was the contention of that fellow judge.

In effect he was saying that giving in to the AIADMK thugs was the only option available before the Tamil Nadu governor. Such is the wonderful state of democracy.

To this day Beevi has not cared to come forward to justify her decision. That by convention Governors keep off the media has proved to be quite convenient for her. But her decision has been challenged in the Madras High court as also in the Supreme Court. She would have to respond to the court notices, when she would have to come out in detail as to the rationale behind her decision.

The position of Jayalalitha is not all that safe, as it might seem. At the centre of the controversy is the Election Commission norm that anyone convicted to a two-year term stands disqualified. Now Jayalalitha has to succeed in getting that norm struck down as unconstitutional or get a quick stay on her conviction itself, enabling her to contest a by-election within the next

five months, one months having already expired since her assuming office.

But some of the recent Supreme Court judgements do not seem to be all that helpful for her. If anything the judges might be very annoyed with the way she has succeeded in short-circuiting the Commission norms. Besides the constitution of the special courts against her has been upheld, it may be noted here.

In the circumstances, many wonder whether she might be able to continue as the Chief Minister beyond six months and believe that she might be forced to nominate one of her flunkies as the Chief Minister and then rule the state through remote control. Her best hope lies perhaps in rebuilding her relationship with the BJP and persuading the Centre to plead her case before the Supreme Court. Already she has started making some friendly noises, saying she is not for confrontation, etc. Even during the campaign she did not breathe a word against the BJP despite the fact that she was supposed to be heading a "secular alliance". So far the BJP has not bothered to reciprocate, though they have not exactly been very aggressive in their criticism of the AIADMK.

Prime Minister Vajpayee, who at the moment has the last word on most issues in the BJP, cannot get over the traumatic times he had to undergo when the AIADMK was a part of the National Democratic Alliance, it is said. So long as he is in charge, there is no way the alliance with the AIADMK. would be revived. L.Ganesan, president of the Tamil Nadu unit of the BJP, has generally been quite critical of Jayalalitha, and there is no perceptible change in his attitude.

What with the shattering blows the BJP allies received in the recently concluded Assembly elections and the general resentment over the new economic policies of the NDA government, Vajpayee's position might be getting weakened inside the BJP. Some of hard-core RSS ideologues have come out in the open against him, charging him with making too many compromises in order to stay on in power and that liberalization had only sounded the death-knell of the native industry.

"Why should we be in power if we cannot implement our own policies?" they wonder in public.

By the same token, Home Minister L.K.Advani's star is on the ascendant in the party. He might even be made the Deputy Prime Minister by way of satisfying the Sangh Parivaar, some reports say. He might not mind reviving the ties with the AIADMK, it is claimed

Besides it is inconceivable that Governor Beevi would have dared call up Jayalalitha to form the government without a nod from the Centre, it is argued. MDMK's Vai.Ko. and the PMK's Dr.Ramadoss too are said to be working overtime to help expedite the process.

The logic seems to be that another round of mid-term parliamentary elections would become inevitable in the near future. As and when they take place, it would be much better to rope in Amma who is on a winning trail. Karunanidhi is eminently expendable as the people have turned against him. Both Vai.Ko. and Ramadoss would do everything in their capacity to destroy Karunanidhi, and they both have continued to maintain a rapport with the BJP high command.

Incidentally what did Vai.Ko. achieve by going it alone in the recent elections? He caused the defeat of the DMK in more than 25 constituencies, that is all. His party could not win a single seat, and his candidates forfeited their security deposit in all the 213 constituencies the MDMK had put up its candidates.

True he continues to make some anti-Jayalalitha noises, but he makes no secret of his glee over the debacle of his former mentor. He had stormed out of the alliance over a minor issue, that the DMK would not allocate to the MDMK just three of the seats it was demanding. Surely going blank in the Assembly yet again and meeting with a massive defeat is not a price worth paying for a mere three seats of one's choice, outsiders might think. But Vai.Ko supporters seem to be still under the delusion that after Karunanidhi he would be able to "capture" the DMK since Stalin lacks Vai.Ko.'s charisma. Only because he did not want strengthen the chances of Stalin's succes-

sion, Vai.Ko. cleverly walked out of the alliance at a very crucial moment, they say. But then that could prove self-defeating. He might have antagonised the DMK cadres in a big way by such a gesture, and they might never again accept him.

In fact there are reports that the state BJP leadership is upset over the way he is seeking to flaunt his "proximity" to Vajpayee and is planning to ditch him in the near future. It is in such a context he is reported to be working zealously to revive the BJP's ties with the AIADMK, in such an NDA edition, his place might be more secure than now, he seems to think.

Jayalalitha herself, in the appointment of ministers and officials for key postings, seems to be taking extra care to project a positive image of her government. So far nothing has been done to alienate the public in general. Even in the matter of pursuing her political rivals, she is proceeding with caution. Yes, a few have been arrested and a few more might follow suit. But she is not seen to be running amok, at least not as yet. Even in the matter of Stalin, she has not gone overboard though there were persistent reports that his arrest would be Amma's gift to Aiya's 78th birthday which fell on June 3. But nothing of that sort happened.

She wants first to build a public mood against adversaries and then proceed. She is currently harping on the good old Sarkaria commission which had indicted Karunanidhi and his associates over 30 years ago. The Commission's findings came to nothing, and even the two CBI cases arising from the report were withdrawn, when Karunanidhi struck up an alliance with Mrs. Gandhi in 1980. Even a former CBI official who led the investigations then is skeptical of the possibility of the Supreme Court's assenting to any move to revive those cases, after such a long lapse of time.

But Jayalalitha's strategy seems to be to pursue her adversaries with all the might at her command even while ensuring that the public in general are not disenchanted in any way. One has to wait and see whether such a strategy works. But a lot will hinge upon whether she is able to get herself elected to the Assembly in the next five months. ●

The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism in Pakistan

Prof. Hamza Alavi

Religious fundamentalism has become a powerful and dangerous force in Pakistan, due mainly to the opportunism of successive political leadership that has pandered to it. Militant sectarian religious groups and parties, led by half-educated and bigoted mullahs, many of them armed to the teeth, are holding our civil society and the state to ransom. They threaten the very fabric of Pakistan's society.

Threats of disruption from religious parties have escalated in recent decades. They have steadily grown in strength since the time of General Ziaul Haq. They now claim that they are the true custodians of Pakistan and that it was they, the mullahs, who had fought successfully for Pakistan, to establish a theocratic state for Muslims. Facts contradict such claims. With the exception of Ghulam Ahmad Parvez's pro-Pakistan Tulu-i-Islam, group, all religious groups and parties, including the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind, the Majli-i-Ahrar and the Jamaat-i-Islami, had all bitterly opposed the Pakistan Movement and abused its leadership which was secular.

The Muslim League, the Party that led the Pakistan movement, was a party of modern educated Muslim professionals and government job seekers (whom, for the sake of brevity, we may call the 'salarial'). It had little to do with the outlook of bigoted mullahs. It was free of any millenarian ideological pretences about creating an Islamic state. It was a movement of Muslims rather than a movement of Islam. Behind it was a new class of English educated Muslim professionals and government job seekers that came into being in the 19th century. It got organised politically by the turn of the century, seeking a better deal for themselves vis-à-vis Hindus who were advancing relatively more rapidly in these fields. When the Muslim League was founded in 1906 at a meeting convened by Nawab Salimullah at Dhaka, the new party was immediately hijacked by the Aligarh group led by Nawab Viqar ul-

Mulk. Aligarh was at the vanguard of the new Northern Indian Muslim salariat class, the sons of the Muslim Ashraf [nobility], who were deeply conscious of the loss of their privileges with the advent of British rule and the relatively more rapid rise of Hindu educated classes. The main base of the Muslim salariat was in UP and Bihar for, at that time, the Muslim salariat was relatively weaker in the Muslim majority provinces.

The Muslim League was focused entirely on its secular demands of western educated Muslim professionals and the salariat. Attempts to place the issue of Islamic ideology on the agenda of the Muslim League were both rare and invariably unsuccessful. Arguably, the earliest of such attempts was one by Shibli Numani to Islamise the Aligarh syllabus. Shibli was explicitly committed to theocratic values and wanted to shift the emphasis of the Aligarh syllabus away from English and modern sciences, towards Islamic learning and the Arabic language. The response of the Muslim salariat class to that attempt is exemplified by the remarks of Sir Raza Ali, who was a close collaborator of Sir Syed's immediate successors, Muhsin ul-Mulk and Viqar ul-Mulk. With them, Raza Ali was at the centre of the Aligarh establishment. In an article in the daily Statesman opposing Shibli's move, he remarked that the idea of reviving Arabic knowledge was, of course, beguiling for Muslims. But he warned that they should not ignore the demands of our times, for the most urgent need of Indian Muslims was to be offered education that would be beneficial in the affairs of this world; education that would help their coming generations to earn their livelihood. Sir Raza Ali spelt out the principal concern of the educated Muslim middle class at the time. Their concern was not about a hypothetical return to original Islam and the creation of an 'Islamic State', ruled over by mullahs, that Shibli had dreamt about. Shibli had to leave Aligarh, for

it was not the place where his theocratic ideas could flourish. Among the rare attempts to bring the issue of 'Islamic Ideology' on to the agenda of the Muslim League was one that was planned for the Delhi Session of the AIML in April 1943. One Abdul Hameed Kazi (backed by 'Maulana' Abdul Sattar Niazi) canvassed support for a resolution, which he intended to table. That would commit the Muslim League to an Islamic ideology and the creation of an Islamic state. But pressure from everyone around him forced Kazi to abandon the idea. The resolution was not even moved. The Pakistan movement remained firmly committed to its secular concerns. In his keynote speech before the inaugural meeting of Pakistan's new Constituent Assembly, on 11th August 1947, Mr. Jinnah spelt out the Pakistan Ideology, namely the secular and tolerant vision of the new state. That speech was not a sudden aberration, as some Islamic ideologists, and General Zia's hacks, were later to allege. It was consistent with what Mr. Jinnah had been saying for decades. The Muslim League had always been committed to a secular society.

Following Mr. Jinnah, his political successor, Liaquat Ali Khan, too reiterated the Muslim League's secular values. When Liaquat moved the Objectives Resolution in the Constituent Assembly in March 1949 he declared that 'As I have just said, the people are the real recipients of power. This naturally eliminates any danger of the establishment of a theocracy.' Despite that clear statement by the mover of the Objectives Resolution, later religious ideologues, notably General Zia and his hacks, have claimed that the Objectives Resolution was a charter for the imposition of the 'Sharia' (as they would interpret it) although the word Sharia does not occur anywhere in that Resolution. Their argument is based on some conventional generalities in the Resolution, which said that 'Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives, in the individual and collective spheres, in accord with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and the Sunna'. That did not amount to a charter for the creation of a theocratic, 'Islamic' State.

Liaquat's position on the Muslim League's traditional secularism was,

however, soon to be reversed. Not so very long after the Objectives Resolution was passed, Liaquat began to change his tune for his political base was threatened by splits in the Muslim League in the Punjab, which was the power-base of Pakistan's ruling elite. That was due to factional conflict between Daulatana and Mamdot who left the Muslim League to form a rival Party. Liaquat was now in a panic. He decided to exploit Islamic rhetoric, to hold together his crumbling Party. He began to speak of 'Islam in Danger'. He also began to equate loyalty to the Muslim League with loyalty to the state. Those who opposed him or his party were denounced as traitors.

There was, however, a second and a much more important reason why Liaquat decided to abandon his secular stance. Powerful regional movements had arisen in East Bengal, Sindh, Balochistan and the NWFP, whose people felt that they were not being given their due in a Punjabi dominated Pakistan. They demanded regional autonomy and fairer shares of resources. The Centre, which was seen as 'Punjabi', was in fact dominated by a



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cohesive bureaucracy, under Chaudhri Muhammad Ali as Secretary General to the Government. It was the centralised bureaucracy that ruled Pakistan whilst politicians, including Liaquat, went through the motions. Arguably, it was the challenge to the centre from regional movements which was the more important factor in precipitating Liaquat's ideological volte-face. Abandoning Mr. Jinnah's (and his own) firm stand against pandering to the mullahs, Liaquat sought to negate regional demands by issuing calls for 'unity' in the name of Pakistan and Islam. We were all Pakistanis and Muslims, it was now argued, and therefore we could not be Bengalis or Sindhis or Baloch.

The bureaucracy, rather than Liaquat, was in effective control, and it was not prepared to make any significant concessions to the mullahs. The mullahs could be given a visible public role, but without any real share in power. For that purpose a Board of Talimaat-i-Islamia, was set up. It provided a few jobs for some senior mullahs, the Ulama. But the Board was to be no more than a façade for the new-found religious rhetoric of politicians. It was not to have any real powers. Its function was purely advisory and that too only on matters that were referred to it. When the Board did make some suggestions they were uncereemoniously ignored. Nevertheless, the Ulama seemed to be content with the arrangement. They remained quiescent for nearly two decades. Recalcitrant Mullahs, such as Maulana Maududi, found themselves in jail. The mullahs were under control. That basically peaceful scene was disturbed only temporarily in 1953, when Islamic militants launched Anti-Ahmadi riots in the Punjab and Martial Law was proclaimed. Although religious zealots of the Majlis-i-Ahrar and the Jamaat-i-Islami led the riots, they were in fact being used by cynical political forces, led by Punjab Chief Minister Mumtaz Daulatana. That was done in the context of US attempts to destabilise the Nazimuddin Government at the centre and to counter the Bengal group of MPs in the matter of the proposed Pakistan-US military Alliance which they opposed. That is a long and complicated story.

A decade and a half later, religious rhetoric was indulged in by the illegitimate regime of General Yahya Khan, but without conceding any formal role to the mullahs. General Sher Ali, rede-

fined 'Pakistan Ideology' as 'Islamic Ideology'. The Yahya government's primary concern was to de-legitimise the increasingly powerful Bengali nationalism. Yahya's Bengali adviser, Prof. G. W. Choudhury, had persuaded him and his coterie of Generals, that East Bengali nationalism was limited to only a handful of intellectuals, who were in the pay of the Indians and that the vast majority of Bengalis had no sympathy with them. That tragically false picture could account for the ferocity and reckless manner in which Yahya tried to suppress the Bengali people in 1971. Would they have embarked on that policy if Yahya had even the slightest inkling of the depth of Bengali feelings?

The mullahs were quiescent, however, until they were stirred into action by the foolish populist rhetoric of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who misguidedly decided to exploit religious ideology. Thereby Bhutto sowed the seeds of his own destruction, for the re-activated mullahs became the vanguard of the campaign against him. That set the scene for Gen. Zia's coup d'état. It was under General Zia that narrow and bigoted religiosity became state policy. The General sought the political support of the mullahs for his illegal regime, for he had no other political base. He also sought financial support from the Reagan regime in the US. Both of these objectives, he thought, could be secured through an Islamic Jihad which he proclaimed against the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. The CIA took over the task of organising armed religious groups in Afghanistan, in cooperation with Pakistani agencies. When the Russians left Afghanistan, however, the CIA was withdrawn precipitately from the scene, leaving it to Pakistan to deal with the mess that they had created. Foolish Pakistani policies since then, especially under Benazir Bhutto and her successor Nawaz Sharif, got Pakistan even more heavily involved with these once US sponsored 'terrorist groups'. The present government has done little to turn away from these policies to extricate Pakistan from the mess that was inherited from Zia's Afghan policy.

When he seized power illegally, Zia badly needed some source of legitimacy for his regime. Being politically bankrupt, he decided to exploit the credulity of Pakistani Muslims by invoking Allah. He claimed to have experienced

ilham (a divine revelation) in which, he declared, he was enjoined by the Almighty himself to Islamise Pakistan and to transform it into a fortress of Islam. New 'Islamic Laws' were promulgated that were crude and cruel distortions of Islamic teachings, such as his Hudud Ordinance which, for example, had the effect of punishing a rape victim (for fornication) while the perpetrator of the rape went scot-free because of impossible conditions of proof now needed to prove his guilt! Zia also bequeathed to his successors undemocratic Shariat Courts that are answerable to no one. They issue binding decisions on the state and on the people, in the name of the Sharia. That role, in the name of Islam, is rejected by the philosophy of Sir Syed Ahmad who pointed out that Islam did not decree the office of a Pope with powers to issue binding decrees in the name of the faith. Islam, he said, is a religion of the individual conscience. No person or institution has the right to issue binding fatawa, laying down what Islam is and what it is not. Indeed, no other Muslim country has the equivalent of our Shariat Courts. They were set up by Zia's illegitimate regime and should be dissolved.

The Shariat Courts are manned by persons who hold rigid religious views. Their most damaging decision so far is an order that requires the abolition of interest, 'in all its forms', by 30th June, 2001. This threatens to bring Pakistan's already very shaky economy to a complete halt. No enemy of Pakistan could have devised a more potent weapon to destroy the country. In arriving at their decision the judges of the Shariat Bench of the Supreme Court set aside the advice of a very large number of scholars who came before it as witnesses, who resisted this interpretation of the Sharia. Instead, the Court appears to have been misled by bogus claims of 'Islamic Banking'. They seem to be ignorant of how a modern economy functions and do not seem to have understood at all the obvious implications of their decision in a modern day capitalist economy such as that of Pakistan. They appear to be ignorant of the difference between interest in a modern capitalist economy (sood) and usury (riba) in pre-capitalist economies to which Quranic strictures apply. What the Shariat Courts have produced is a time bomb which, if allowed to go off, threatens to blow up Pakistan's economy.

The present Government seems to be paralysed in the face of the die-hard religious lobby which seems to be triumphant about this. It has poor advisers. As soon as the Shariat Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court announced its decision, the Minister of Finance, who is an ex-banker, declared, without pausing to think, that the Court's decision would be implemented in full. But, after months of deliberations by several high powered committees, the Government still has no idea whatever of what is to be done. It speaks with two voices. At a recent meeting, the Federal Minister for Religious Affairs declared that the Government has drafted all required laws and regulations, which are ready to be promulgated and that the Government is ready to implement the Shariat Court's decision in full, and without qualifications. But at the same meeting, the Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan (the country's central Bank) declared that they do not as yet know how the Shariat Court decision can be implemented. He said that the Government needs more time to work out viable solutions and that it has asked for an extension of

time.

The Government does not seem to understand the gravity of this issue. They should know that they cannot allow the economy to collapse. But they also appear to be too intimidated by religious fundamentalists to overturn the Shariat Court's decree. Meanwhile, the top nine religious parties in the country have declared that they will launch a mass anti-Riba movement, on the lines of the movement that brought down Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, if the Government fails to abolish interest by the date laid down by the Shariat Bench of the Supreme Court, namely the end of June, 2001. They have declared, ominously, that the time has come for a decisive war between Islamic and secular forces in the country!

A major factor in the present situation is a development since the time of Zia. That is the proliferation of deeni madaris, religious schools that have spread throughout Pakistan. They receive generous foreign funding, not least from Middle Eastern states like Saudi Arabia. The deeni madaris have little difficulty in recruiting pupils (taliban), who are turned into fanatics,

ready to die for what they are taught to believe are sacred causes. A factor that has greatly helped their recruitment is the creation of a huge number of unemployed families, people without a livelihood and without hope, as a consequence of farm mechanisation, especially in the Punjab. Every tractor displaces at least a dozen families of sharecroppers. Hundreds of thousands of them are now without a source of livelihood. In that context, the appearance of the well financed deeni madaris, who take over their children, give them free 'tuition', accommodation and food, cannot appear to be anything other than a great blessing. The enthusiastic young taliban are taught to recite the Quran. They are also indoctrinated, their minds filled with distorted and intolerant ideas about what Islam is and what it prescribes. The taliban are thus turned into fanatics. Most of the 'deeni madaris also give them military training for jihad initially ostensibly against the Soviets and now for the liberation of Kashmir. But already Pakistan itself is experiencing the inevitable heavy fallout from this. The armed groups, many

(continued on page 29)

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NEPAL

Mystery of the Shootout in the Palace

ANAND SWARUP VERMA

It is rather unlikely that - during the last 150 years of Nepal's history - one would find a parallel to as grave a crisis as has presently come about in the mountain kingdom. The mystery shrouding the palace shootout on the night of June 1-2 can only be unveiled when one among the wounded could possibly be in a condition to come out with a statement as regards what happened at the palace that fateful night and how it happened. As of reports currently available, Prince Dipendra* - who has been named as the new King by the ruling council - is virtually on his death-bed in the hospital and the chances of his survival can virtually be ruled out. The shootout victim King Birendra's younger brother Dhirendra and brother-in-law Gorakh Samsher are also counting their last breath at the military hospital in the cantonment area.

In this scenario, the people of Nepal and those of the other parts of the world have been left with little choice but to go by the official version that Crown Prince Dipendra - unsuccessful at convincing his parents to marry him to the girl of his choice - fired out bullets indiscriminately from an automatic weapon in an inebriated condition. And that he later shot himself as well. Such a statement was initially made on behalf of 'top military sources' and was repeated by the country's Home Minister Ramchandra Paundel.

But, looking at the sensitivity of the situation, Paundel amended his statement subsequently by stating that the administration did not have information as regards the matter. Indeed, since the incident happened inside the palace, the truth in the matter has not been ascer-

tained. Eight persons of the royal family, including King Birendra and his wife, have been killed in this unfortunate incident while several others have been injured.

The latest reports are that, in all, 14 persons have died. The people of Nepal are apparently unable to convince themselves to accept the official theory as regards the macabre palace incident. Of the version that has been propagated, this part is true: That there was tension in the royal family as regards Prince Dipendra's choice of the girl he wished to marry. But there are few takers for the line that Prince Dipendra - disturbed with his parents hostility to the girl of his choice - indulged in a wild shooting spree to gun down members of his entire family. And this was the reason that - at the time when King Birendra's body was being taken in a procession to the cremation spot - sections of the crowd had raised slogans against Prime Minister Koirala and Regent Prince Gyanendra. The crowds had even started stoning the Prime Minister's car near the Swayambhu Gate and the car's window screens had also got broken. The crowds were so agitated that the police had had to resort to 'lathi charge'.

Because of the fast foreword manner in which the developments took place, the people's suspicions continued to grow. This had been expected that the dead bodies of King Birendra and his family members would be kept in state for people to pay their last homage; but nothing of this sort was done. The usual practice - upon the death of a King or head of state - is that the Constitutional heads of different nations arrive to attend the cremation cer-

emony. In this case, neither was any leader of the outside world invited, nor was he permitted to come. Indian President KR Narayanan and Home Minister LK Advani, according to a statement made by the External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh, were scheduled to go to Kathmandu to attend King Birendra's cremation for expressing their grief at the unfortunate incident.

But were asked by Nepal not to come. And this is also true that even the Kathmandu-based Ambassadors of different countries were forbidden from taking part in the cremation ceremony.

These are the facts that provide strength to suspicions that there was possibly a grave conspiracy behind the killings and that it is a cooked-up version that is being dished out by the official machinery. In general, the people of Nepal are unable to accept the view that Prince Dipendra would wipe out members of his own family in so random and thoughtless a manner on such a small provocation. Those who knew Prince Dipendra say that he was a highly cultured and charming personality who had a deep interest in literature. And that this was most unexpected of him that he would effect so gruesome and heartless a massacre. Anyhow, even as the ruling council's Chairman Kesaraj Raimajhi has crowned Dipendra as the new King, the man continues to count virtually his last breaths at the intensive care unit of the military hospital - with the curse of ignominy writ large on his forehead.

Nepalese people can - and do - recall still the massacre of parallel dimensions and cruelty that has once happened in the country's history, some 150 years ago. Known in popular jargon as the 'Kot massacre' - several ministers, army commanders and relatives of the King had been done to death at that time. The occasion was the community lunch invitation handed out by the then Queen Rajya Lakshmi Devi at Kot (Prangan) of the Basantpur Durbar on 15 September 1846. It was here that Jang Bahadur Rana had indulged in a large-scale massacre. The Rana clan had then ascended to power in Nepal and the reign of this dynasty lasted upto 1950. The first massacre was an out-

come of a political conspiracy. Could there be an element of a political conspiracy to the present massacre as well? And if there is a political conspiracy to the present killings of royal family members, what could have been the motives?

Nepal's politics currently is experiencing a process of assimilation and change. The process of assimilation and change from a monarchy to a democratic system. Quite alright to say that the process of a multi-party democracy did get initiated in 1990. But everybody is aware about the pitiful state in which Nepal's democracy is today poised. For the last one week had Nepal remained virtually 'closed' and the anger of the people against Prime Minister Koirala's 'corrupt regime' had continued to grow. All political parties besides the ruling combine had been continuing to demand the resignation of Prime Minister Koirala. And this was not all: The Government's ineptness at handling the six year-long 'people's war' by the Maoists had continued to get highlighted day after day. Prime Minister Koirala had continuously been pressurizing King Birendra for permission to deploy the armed forces for dealing with the Maoist activists.

But King Birendra was not agreeable to such suggestions. What he had maintained was that he had refrained from employing the army even on May 3, 1990 when thousands upon thousands of people had marched in a procession on Durbar marg - shouting slogans against the monarchy and posing themselves for an attack on the royal palace.

King Birendra was an able and sensitive ruler who firmly believed that the army was for fighting the external enemy alone - and that it was unfair and unprincipled to deploy the army against the countrymen. In spite of this - and on account of his inability to withstand so many different sorts of pressures from so many quarters - King Birendra had given permission for the army to remain 'alert' in some areas. Even so, care had been taken to ensure that there was nothing in the administration's conduct to show on the surface that this step had been taken to oppress the Mao-

ist groups. Therefore, a middle path had been found out. It was decided that the army could be sent to those underdeveloped and remote areas where developmental works were being hampered on account of the activities of the rebels - under what was called the ISDP plan. The activities of the army were initiated in the Khagani area on May 26. Under the first phase of the ISDP plan, it had been decided to send the army to the following districts: Rolpa, Rukum, Kalikot, Piyuthan, Jajarkot and Salyan. These are the very areas that are considered as the bastions of the Maoists.

What is clear from the above facts is this: That those that had been demanding army action against the Maoists were not in the least bit happy with the attitude of King Birendra. In their analysis, Birendra was a weak King. These sections had possibly held a secret desire of having such a King who would take stern action at such a juncture.

King Birendra's nationalistic inclinations had possibly disturbed or irritated those powers also that were desirous of establishing their supremacy in South Asia. This is no coincidence: That the first reaction about the current massacre came from the foreign department of the United States and this was emphasized that whatever had happened in the royal palace might well be unbelievable, but it was true. A news item published in the Los Angeles Times quotes the US foreign department as stating that 'all available sources' pointed to the fact that whatever was being said about the royal murders was true. That this was certainly an unbelievable and unfortunate outcome of an unbelievable sort of a tussle between the members of the Nepalese royal family. This has been said in the newspaper on behalf of an American official whose name has been kept secret. But the US Foreign Department's official statement, published in the same newspaper, states that 'it is not clear as to who is responsible for the massacre. But there seems to be no political conspiracy behind this'. Further, the US official has expressed apprehensions about the possibility of

certain leverages or gains being made by the Maoists in Nepal in the days to come - as a result of the current scenario. About the same things have been said in another US newspaper: The Christian Science Monitor. This newspaper says that the vacuum created out of the inefficiency of the political parties in Nepal was a factor that was assisting the Maoists in gaining stable ground.

It is clear that the growing influence of the Maoists in Nepal has continued to be a factor that apparently has continued to disturb the United States. Given the scenario, it might have been rather difficult for the US to deal with a King such as Birendra. We ought not to forget the fact that - the onset of multi-party democracy in Nepal notwithstanding - there had come about no lack of respect for the Nepal King among the populace. Indeed, King Birendra's stature had got further enhanced because of the manner in which he had facilitated the transition from monarchy to a democratic rule. His image had continued to get augmented day by day as a nationalist and a democrat. Not a surprise if the United States had begun to see in him an image of the Cambodian ruler Prince Sinhanuk. The Maoists had begun to establish such a marked presence on Nepal's political spectrum; the US aims of establishing a hegemony in South Asia was somewhere getting lost! In such a scenario, what is needed is not a strong but a weak ruler - one who is flexible enough to fulfill the interests of the United States. When we look for the motives of the royal murders, we cannot remain oblivious of these sorts of dark shadows that emerge on the political horizons. Time alone will tell this: Whether installing a half-dead Prince Dipendra as the King and Prince Gyanendra as the Regent are events that have come about in the natural course? Or whether there is a well thought out strategy behind this?

[JANSATTA, June 04, 2001]

* Since writing this piece, the crown prince had been confirmed dead, and the King's brother has assumed the throne as King.

(Continued from page 26)

of them with battle-hardened taliban, are in the vanguard of sectarian killings throughout Pakistan, which are on the increase; killings of members of rival sects, Sunnis against the Shi'a, Deobandi Sunnis against Barelvi Sunnis and so on. They have also begun to issue threats against the state itself and the society in Pakistan. Instead of a viable policy designed to disarm and liquidate such groups, successive regimes in Pakistan have pandered to them. The current military government, unlike the military regime of General Zia, has not indulged much in religious rhetoric, except for the occasional utterances of its Federal Minister for Religious Affairs. Indeed, the Government's liberal interior minister, General Moinuddin Haider, has given calls, from time to time, about doing something to bring the so-called deeni madaris under some sort of control, reforming their syllabi to introduce some useful, career related, educational input into their activities. For that he has become the bête noir of the religious parties, who have warned the government, firmly, against meddling in their

affairs.

The government, for its part, seems to be intimidated by the militant Islamic groups. In December last, for example, one Maulana Muhammad Akram, leader of the Tanzimul Ikhwan, threatened to march on Islamabad with 'hundreds of thousands' of his followers, to force the Government to promulgate the Sharia. The Government's response was to placate him. It despatched the Punjab Home Secretary and the Inspector General of Police to parley with Akram. That was apparently not enough, for it then sent Dr. Mahmood Ghazi, the Federal Minister for Religious Affairs, as reinforcement. After long drawn out talks, Maulana Akram 'graciously agreed' to defer his plan to storm the capital. It has been suggested by the media that Maulana Akram has 'a lot of influence among middle-ranking officers of the army'. If that is so, that must surely be extremely worrying. Could it be that which explains the Government's apparent paralysis in the face of serious threats from fanatical religious groups? It must know that a do nothing policy will not solve anything. Left to itself, the situation can

only get worse.

Theories of the state, democratic or otherwise, are premised on the state's monopoly of legitimate force. But here we have a situation where the state's monopoly of force is undermined by the numerous armed religious groups (who often work in concert) that have agendas of their own. The Government must realise that the more they try to accommodate religious zealots, the stronger and the more intransigent they become. What the situation demands is a firm and well thought out policy to disarm such groups and bring them under control. It is surprising that Pakistan's professional military does not yet seem to have realised the very serious threat that this situation poses to itself as well as to the State and society as a whole. In the meantime, until something is done, Pakistan will continue to stagger towards an uncertain future, with contradictory state policies.

Professor Hamza Alavi is Pakistan's leading sociologist and educationist. He read this paper at the South Asian Conference on Religious Fundamentalism held in Dhaka on June 1-2, 2001 [The Friday Times 15 June 2001]

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MATRIMONIAL

Tamil Hindu brother seeks professional groom for sister, Dental Surgeon, Sri Lanka, 34, fair, tall, slim. Please send horoscope, details. M 1245 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek partner for professional daughter, 26, working in London. Please send horoscope, details. M 1246 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional groom for attractive, fair, graduate daughter in good employment in UK with Mars slightly afflicted. Please send horoscope, details. M 1247 c/o Tamil Times.

Professional Hindu London Groom, 28, 5'9", Mars, Sai devotee, vegetarian, spiritual, considerate, ambitious but caring seeks professional bride. Send horoscope, details to: nahoy28@hotmail.com or M

1248 c/o Tamil Times.

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Komathy daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nadesan of 1 Evenwood Close, Putney, London SW15 2DA and **Vasan** son of Mr. & Mrs. Sivagurunathan of 64 Clarence Avenue, New Malden, Surrey KT3 3EB on 10th June 2001 at Guildford Civic Hall, Guildford, Surrey GU1 2AA.

Niranjan son of Dr. & Mrs. Kumaranayagam of 16 Blenheim Close, Sawbridge-worth, Herts CM21 0BE and

Nirupa daughter of Dr. & Mrs. Canagaratnam, 36 Cranborne Avenue, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN20 7TT on 10th June 2001 at Oshwal Centre, Coopers Lane North, Northaw, Herts EN6 4DG.

OBITUARIES



(22.12.1903 – 16.5.2001)

Mr. Sangarapillai Vaithianathan, Retired Mathematics Teacher, St. Henry's College, Ilavalai, Jaffna and Victoria College, Chulipuram, Jaffna; beloved husband of the late Selvanayakipillai; brother of the late S. Navaratnam; loving

father of Dr. V. Satkumaranayagam; father-in-law of Rasu and grandfather of Kuhan, peacefully passed away on 16th May 2001. The funeral took place at Leatherhead Crematorium on 26th May 2001.

The family would like to thank all the relatives and friends who helped during the time of bereavement, attended the funeral, paid floral tributes, sent messages of condolence and shared in their grief. - 10 Kendor Avenue, Epsom, Surrey KT19 8RH. Tel: 01372 813265.

Mr. Suppiah Annamuttu, former Accountant in Zambia, Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka; beloved husband of Balasoundery; loving father of Parimala Vijeyekumar, Dr. Vignesh, Dr. Erajasekeran, late Ragunathan and Sritheran (Accountant, Australia); father-in-law of late Vijeyekumar (Accountant, Canada), Devaki (Chartered Accountant, Aus-

Tenth Death Anniversary



In Ever Loving Memory of Balasubramaniam Sivagananathan

On the tenth anniversary of his passing away on 22nd June 1991.

Remembered with love and affection by his step mother Mrs. Rajaletchumy Balasubramaniam (Australia), wife Kamala (Sri Lanka); brothers Dr. Sivaloganathan (UK), Thirunavukkarasu (Australia), Radhakrishnan (Chennai) and Sriharan (Australia); sisters Mrs. Gowri Pathmanathan, Mrs. Bhagawathy Mohanadas (both of Sri Lanka), Mrs. Mangayarkkarsi Jetheendran, Mrs. Jayanthi Kumaranayagam (both of Australia) - 22 Oakwood Drive, St. Albans, Herts. Tel: 01727 853331.

Second Anniversary Remembrance



In ever loving and precious memory of **Mrs. Rasathy Thirunavukkarasu** daughter of the late Dr. and Mrs. Ambalavanar of Suthumalai, Sri Lanka on the second anniversary of her passing away on 4th July 1999.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by her beloved husband Thirunavukkarasu; daughters Vasuki and Dr. Vatsala; sons-in-law Pathmalingam and Suresh; grand children Thusan, Shivi and Suji; brothers Dr. Ponnampalam (Australia) and Sriharan and their families - 28 Foxmead Close, Enfield, Middx EN2 7JG, UK. Tel: 0208 363 0922.

tralia), Jayagowrie (Systems Analyst, Australia), Caroline and Shalin passed away in Australia and was cremated at Rookwood cemetery on 2nd June 2001.

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.

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In Loving Memory of our

Aiyah
Sayambunather Vyramuttu
Rattinam

Born: 30.03.1922



Rest: 30.03.1997

Amma
Vyramuttu Rattinam
Selvanayagi

04.09.1920



09.05.2001

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by sons Pathmanathan, Ramanathan and Loganathan; daughters-in-law Vasuki, Vijayaladchumi and Thanaledchumi; grandchildren Vijayaluxmi Thevakumar, Senthooran, Bhavan, Kugan, Asha-Vidhya and Sathian; great granddaughters Krishni and Vishala. - 3 The Orchard, Wickford, Essex SS12 0HB, UK Tel: (01268) 766624.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Jul 1 Eekathasi; Feast of St. Oliver.

Jul 2 Pirathosam; Feast of Our Lady of Madhu.

Jul 3 Feast of St. Thomas.

Jul 4 Full Moon; Feast of St. Elizabeth of Portugal.

Jul 7 Wimbledon Shree Ghanapathy Temple Koditham (Annual Festival Starts); South London Tamil Welfare Group (SLTWG) Drop In Tel: 020 8542 3285.

Jul 9 Sankadakra Sathurthi.

Jul 11 Feast of St. Benedict.

Jul 13 Feast of St. Henry.

Jul 14 SLTWG Drop In. Tel: 020 8542 3285.

Jul 15 SLTWG trip to Walshingham Church.

Jul 16 Karthigai; Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Jul 17 Eekathasi.

Jul 18 Pirathosam.

Jul 20 Aadi Amavasai.

Jul 21 Feast of St. Laurence of Brindisi.

Jul 23 Sathurthi; Aadi Puram; Feast of St. Bridget.

Jul 25 Shashti; Feast of St. James.

Jul 28 SLTWG Trip to Isle of Wight. Tel: 020 8524 3285.

Jul 29 Shree Ghanapathy Temple Ther; Feast of St. Martha.

Jul 30 Eekathasi; Shree Ghanapathy Temple Theertham.

Jul 31 Feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

At the Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HG. Tel: 020 7381 3086/4608.

Jul 7 6.30pm. Bharatanatyam by Prakash Yadagudde and his students.

Jul 27 7.45pm Camatic Vocal by Padma Vibhushana Dr. M. Balamurali Krishna at Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Yogarajah - A Tribute



The death of Yogarajah has affected a large number of people. Bright, full of ambition and verve, he leaves behind his devoted wife Shanti, son Senthesean, scores of friends and thousands of readers of his column in the papers in which he addressed current issues of social concern.

Yogarajah came to England in the late 70's and walked into South London Tamil School in 1987. Friends remember him as a dark, affectionate, laughing comic, whose gentle man-

ners barely concealed his sense of humour. His style of communication, unassuming manner, infectious smile and his unceasing jokes marked him as someone who can fulfil himself in several genres. To his friends he was a comic legend, a beguiling raconteur, but that rare being, an egoist, who was interested in other's histories, a good friend who never talked down. He was a parent and an officer of the school. He nurtured the young and inspired the youth to aspire for higher goals. He loved the children and they responded to him in kind. He gave them responsibility and left them to it. He laughed with them when celebrating their achievements and was there with them sharing in their sorrows. When someone had a tricky decision to make, he would help to steer towards the right one, without taking any credit for it. His association with the school was continuous and his participation in its activities was total and absolute. Whether he was a member of the governing elite of the school or not, he was always there to promote the welfare of the school and its children. Hence he crowned himself with the unofficial but popular title of 'Minister without Portfolio'.

Yogarajah is an artist who can mix it up. He is the scriptwriter, actor director and producer stage designer of his dramatic productions. In his drama the story goes in several directions - into comedy, the bizarre, the screwball. Some people when they go to the theatre, like the director to take them to unexpected places to make them laugh and be thrilled in the same story. Yogarajah's dramatic productions provided this. He traded his gags in his unique style. There are two Yogarajahs, one the knowing and sarcastic clown with sharp wit and the other a serious artist who produces the dramatic effect. He was intentionally funny and an artiste with an attitude and relished every part of this artistic life.

Success and like-ability are said never to go hand in hand. But once in a lifetime you meet someone like Yogarajah, who is both loved and respected by everyone who worked with him.

Yogarajah was a professional to his fingertips. He was Croydon Community's 'cultural compass'. His quiet authority, born of a lifetime of experience, most of it gained operating directly meant that he was constantly sought out for his advice. His generosity in sharing that knowledge, at least as much as his more visible achievements was the measure of an exceptional man. He was unsparing of his time and wisdom for public causes. He devoted enormous amounts of energy for social and community activities and causes. How much he had done to support various people in the family and the community is demonstrated in our uncontrollable grief in his demise. The effect of his being on those around him was incalculably diffusive. His stamina was phenomenal at parties, where he laughed and sang and he would be the last one on his feet at night. Right up to the end, he maintained his faith that love of his people would weld into a community. Sometimes this faith was severely tried.

Yogarajah had a wide circle of friends and a passion for social life. He played with the young and joked with the old. He enjoyed with his friends and welcomed the strangers. In his death, the Tamils in Croydon have lost one of their most influential companions. Their loss is incalculable and cannot be disguised. After he was gone, Shanti found that her widow's home was 'sieged' by grateful friends, well-wishers and admirers wanting to take her in hand and share in her grief.

He was the candle that lighted our lives.

May he rest in peace!

V. Kuhanendran

Balendras Honoured

Mr. Kanagaratham Balendra and Mrs. Anandarani Balendra were honoured for their 25 years of service to Tamil drama by The Tamil Association of Brent at their 22nd Annual New Year celebrations held at Copland Community School, Wembley on 21st April 2001. The Chief Guest was the Mayor of the London Borough of Brent.

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Mr. T. Selvaratnam, the Chairman of the Association said that in the midst of Tamil cinema, notorious for its poor taste, Mr. Balendra was dedicated to the building of an audience for Tamil drama even before the days of his university education. He has been a successful producer and director of more than forty plays and staged them more than two hundred times in different countries. While he was still a university student he produced and acted in his first serious Tamil drama 'Emipadikal' and soon afterwards 'Pitthaivendram' along with Miss Anandarani Rajaratnam (presently Mrs. A. Balendra). Anandarani's performance hit the headlines and she became a popular artiste among Tamil drama enthusiasts. She has acted in numerous radio dramas and documentaries of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation. She was also a Bharatha Natyam dancer and had given over fifty performances in Colombo.

Both Balendra and Anandarani became a well known duo in the Tamil drama world in Sri Lanka. They staged the popular play *Malai (Rain)* which, in 1978 laid the foundation for the Tamil Performing Arts Society (TPAS). Another popular Tamil drama 'Kannadi Varpukal' which was the first Tamil drama televised by Sri Lankan National Television Rupavahini was produced. The TPAS was inaugurated by the establishing of a serious Tamil Theatre Movement through the continuous staging of plays of quality.

In 1984 TPAS regrouped in UK, and the sixteen years of activity in London, since then included new productions, Annual Drama Festivals from 1991 in UK and Drama Festivals in Holland, Switzerland, Norway, France, Canada and Australia. Anandarani is also a popular dancer teacher and broadcaster in Sunrise Radio and Deepam TV.

Ariyalaioor Ampuyam recited a *Vaalthuyappa* in praise of Mr. and Mrs. Balendra and Mr. Balendra thanked the association for honouring them.

Sri-Lanka Psychiatrists' Association (UK)

A group of Sri-Lankan Psychiatrists practising in UK have formed an Association. This is a preliminary announcement inviting all UK based Sri-Lankan Psychiatrists, regardless of seniority or grade to join this group as members.

An International Psychiatric Conference (organised by the Sri-Lankan Psychiatric Association in UK, together with the Academic Department of Psychological Medicine in Sri-Lanka headed by Professor Nalaka Mendis and the Psychiatrists of Sri-Lanka) will take place in Colombo from 4 to 7 April 2002. We are proud to say that this is the first International Conference to be held in Sri Lanka.

The following members were elected in the recent meeting held in Heathrow, Lon-

don, for the Association.

President: **Dr. Bobby Somasunderam**,
Mobile Tel: 07973 518341, Work Tel: 024 76374434 Ext 122, E-mail: sarah.treadwell@nw-tr.wmids.nhs.uk

Vice President: **Dr. Asoka Wijeyekoon**,
Fax & Home Tel: 0208 5509037, E-mail: asokaw@faxvia.net

Secretary: **Dr. Joseph A Pillai**, Mobile
Tel: 07811 338978, Work Tel: 01344 754077

Asst. Secretary: **Dr. Mike Easwaran** Fax
& Home Tel: 01923 282078, Email: eswaran@bt.internet.com

Treasurer: **Dr. Dayananda Rajapakse**,
Mobile Tel: 07899 960967. Fax: 01638 578901

Asst. Treasurer: **Dr. D.V. Attapattu**,
Home Tel: 01522 534571

International Liaison: **Dr. Pearl Hettiaratchy**,
E-mail: pearlhet@globalnet.co.uk

Please contact any one of the above committee members for enrolment. This is a tremendous opportunity for all Sri-Lankan Psychiatrists to not only have their own identity but also to band together in a spirit of goodwill, to achieve the above mentioned aims.

Dr. Bobby Somasunderam - President
Dr. Asoka Wijeyekoon - Vice President
Sri-Lanka Psychiatrists' Association (UK)

Eason Crowned Young Musician of the Year



The very best of Maidstone and Mid-Kent's Young Musicians took part in the Young Musician of the Year competition at Maidstone's Corn Exchange held on 4th May 2001. The audience was treated to a varied programme by eight finalists on the Piano, Cello, Saxophone, Miruthangam and vocalists, including the Young Composer of the year and the national record-breaking Grade 8 pianist.

The mystical sound of the Orient cast a spell over the judges who reached a unanimous decision and named Eason Kumarasingham, who performed a solo improvisation on the miruthangam, Maidstone and Mid-Kent Young Musician of the Year 2001.

Eason, 17, this year's captain of his school is a Grade 7 pianist, but the ancient Indian drums, the Miruthangam is his main

instrument. Eason, a disciple of Guru Muthu Sivarajah had his Arangetram in 1996 and has completed his Teacher's Diploma practical in Miruthangam. It is amazing that he has introduced and excelled in another type of music.

Chief Judge Nicholas Cleobury said that the performance seemed to have a spiritual quality and was rhythmically and technically wonderful.

Annai-Ilam, five years on

History of Annai-Ilam:

It is a great pleasure to share with you a brief history of 'Annai Ilam' on her fifth birthday of the commencement of the association for counselling and psychological education project in Wannai. Sri Lankan Tamils living in various parts of the world will be familiar with accounts of the tragic plight of the thousands of internally displaced Tamil civilians living in Wannai region and of their suffering through no fault of their own. As you might be aware, these people are affected physically, psychologically, socially and economically. This sudden traumatic experience of being uprooted from their own comfortable homes caused severe shock to many of our people. This resulted in a kind of collective depression among our people. It was in this situation, many NGOs and INGOs attempted to help these people to meet their basic needs.

However, the numbers of people who are affected emotionally seem to be on the increase. These emotional problems are wide ranging and many are related to suicidal ideation.

To help to alleviate their pain, a counselling project was introduced in Wannai on the 16th February 1996. The counselling programme was initiated by the Kilinochchi association for the rehabilitation of the disabled (KAROD), and was financially aided by Oxfam. Fifteen young men and women were selected as trainee councillors. They were given an intensive two-week training course in counselling skills. Fr. Reginald, a few others and myself conducted this training. Following the initial training, these young men and women started visiting the families of displaced people in and around Kilinochchi. During these visits, the volunteers identified people who needed urgent psychological help, they spent time listening to their traumatic stories and counselled regarding coping skills. This project was gradually extended to other areas of Wannai.

Annai-Ilam at present:

Now this counselling project has evolved into a well established independent organisation called the 'Annai-Ilam' an association for counselling and psychological Education. Annai-Ilam provides a 'home' for those affected, and for the needy. This 'home' also serves, like a mother, as a source of strength, and as a sign of hope and purpose in the hearts of those who have suffered so much through the war for

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no fault of theirs. We serve all those in need without any discrimination of race, religion or political affiliation.

Today, there are nineteen trained counsellors who involve themselves in various activities of 'Annai-Illam'. The primary objective of Annai-Illam is to provide individual, and group counselling to those who are identified as needing such help. Our counsellors provide their individual counselling at camps and settlements of displaced people, in hospitals, schools and pre-schools, mental health care institutions, children's homes and homes for the aged.

Our counselling activities help us to see the needs of different groups of people such as adults, youth and children. We have been conducting 'support groups' for young women who had lost the 'bread winners' of the family. A conducive atmosphere is created in these groups. These women meet other individuals who have gone through similar experiences. They are able to share pent-up feelings and thus find emotional support in the group. 'Annai-Illam' is especially concerned with children affected by the ongoing, ravaging war. There are a large number of children, who have become orphans as a direct result of the war. Counsellors have organised 'children groups' for children such as these. The method of: 'Ask and play' is used by our counsellors to help these children to express their feelings, (which they are unable to describe in words). We are also keen in looking for other possible therapeutic means to help these children who will bear the responsibility of shaping the future of our nation.

Whilst providing individual and group counselling services, Annai-Illam also (as previously mentioned), involves itself in group counselling services. Annai-Illam, also involves itself in conducting seminars to various groups of people to create a better psychological awareness among our people in Wannai. A training programme was conducted for the pre-school teachers in Wannai, with members of Annai-Illam who give talks on child psychological development and facilitated group processes among the pre-school teachers. This programme also helped these teachers to identify traumatised children in their schools and to find appropriate means of assisting them. Also A/L and O/L Students, have been trained on leadership skills to provide them with more confidence in order to assist them in living a more satisfied and resourceful life. In addition to the above, when the 'Centre for the Protection of Children' in Wannai conducted 'live-in' training seminars for the case-givers of children homes in Wannai, Annai-Illam was responsible for conducting these training seminars, with talks related to child development that was coupled with group sharing sessions. The participants who were undecided about the programme had uncertain questions answered and at the

end gave very strong positive feedback.

As we are celebrating the completion of five years of our service to our people in Wannai, I thank all those who have journeyed along with us in this venture of helping the helpless.

Annai-Illam and the future:

We have to take our 'Annai-Illam' into the future. There is yet more work to be carried out, more areas to be served, and more people to be reached in this respect. Ever since the start of the project, I have been aware of a persistent demand from leaders in varying fields, including educators, pastors, social workers and medical personnel, to meet the requirements needed to help the victims of war, we need your help in whatever way or form you can.

We need your kind hearted help to continue our service and build on our success. We plan to provide a meal to all those orphans who attend our services, as many of them do not have any money to meet even their basic needs.

We would need a permanent building in which we could start practical occupational therapy in order to train our orphans, physically and mentally disabled victims of war to earn a living of their own and lead a dignified life in their homeland in the future. If you would like to contribute to Annai-Illam please contact the MIOT or SCOT through Tamil Times or directly with Fr. Reginald, at Annai-Illam, 570 Emmas Nagar, Akkarayan, Kilinochchi, Sri Lanka.

With all our counsellors and the board of governors of 'Annai-Illam', I would like to extend a very special thank you to MIOT, and SCOT - UK branches, for generously funding our counselling projects. My deepest thanks go to all the members of the board of governors for their financial contribution and for their support.

**Sister Crisrabel, Co-Director,
Annai-Illam, Kilinochchi, Sri Lanka.**

D.D.N. Selvadurai - Sri Lanka's Tennis Legend

Those who excel in any form of human activity, whether it be Art, Science, Mathematics, Music, Dance or Sports, have acquired their specific qualities passed down to them by their ancestors, in their genetic composition. Pavarotti inherited his famous voice from his father who still sings in the local choir at 85 years. Andrew Lloyd-Webber who has given the world some scintillating tunes inherited his musical ability from his father, who was a Professor of Music. So did D.D.N. Selvadurai also known as Deva, from his father and illustrious grandfather Mr. Nevins Selvadurai, the first Principal of Jaffna Hindu College, who was also an outstanding athlete, cricketer and tennis player in his youth.

Deva received his education at St. Thomas College, Mt. Lavinia, together with his four brothers, which he represented at tennis and cricket. Tennis was his first love and he would sometimes miss his cricket

practice, because he preferred to be on the tennis courts with colleagues like the future tennis champion Rupert Ferdinands and his older brother Timothy with whom he won the Public Schools Doubles Championship. When summoned by Warden De Saram he said that he would like to play both games but preferred tennis. The Warden was taken aback by his forthrightness and said that he would like him to play both games. The college team did not like to play without his batting and bowling abilities and the late Percy Cooke and coach Shelton Gauder also wanted him to play.

Deva won his first Tennis Tournament when he was 14 years old at Carlton Club, Moratuwa where his father was the Medical Officer of Health. During his tennis days at St. Thomas's the school held sway in inter school tennis and his team mates were G.N. Perera, P.S. Kumara, Raja Praesody and Rupert Ferdinands who all went on to play Davis Cup tennis for the country. He represented the country in many tournaments in Sri Lanka and abroad. In 1958 partnering Rajah Praesody they won the South India doubles title and played in two Davis Cup ties against Japan and India. He also represented the country in the two Ganefo Games in Cambodia and Indonesia. The other members of the squads were Bernard Pointo, Ranjan Wattegedara and K. Arichnandran. In 1964 he was the first Asian who qualified as a professional coach. During that time he met the great Harry Hopman who later invited him to work with Nick Bollettieri who later coached Agassi and Jimmy Connors. Among the pupils that he has coached are, Arjun Fernando, Suresh Sivaraman and Shalini Karunaratne. From 1971-'76, he worked with Harry Hopman in Port Washington, New York, as his senior professional coach. In 1974 he opened the first School of tennis in Sri Lanka which was in existence till 1984 when he decided to migrate to Canada and coach during the spring and summer months. As a dual citizen he spends the autumn and winter months conducting coaching classes in Sri Lanka at the D.D.N. Selvadurai Tennis Academy.

Deva says that there is a difference between a coach and a trainer. The coach produces good players up to a certain level. But for a higher level of tennis one needs a trainer. It is the trainer who fashions a champion. He says that in Sri Lanka there are no high level coaches and no trainers. As a result there is stagnation.

Some say they are waiting for the war to be over so that they could concentrate on Sports, although cricket and athletics are going from strength to strength. One hopes there would be more politicians interested in Tennis!

There is no-one in Sri Lanka who has remained in the tennis scene for so long and continues to coach. At the age of 67 years he's truly a Tennis Legend and a source of pride to the Tamils of Sri Lanka.

A.J.N. Selvadurai.

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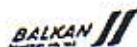
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