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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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CONTENTS

Politics of Cohabitation	03
News Track	04
'Vacuum Bombs' to Lanka	05
Election Results	09
LTTE's Terms for Talks	13
UNA-TNA-LTTE - Peace Talks	16
Defeating Pessimism & Peace	17
Consensual Politics	18
Peace Hopes Rise	21
JVP Projects New Image	23
The Right to Franchise	25
Appreciation	26
Xenophobic Mind	27
Hare and Tortoise in Race	28
Classified Plus	29

Cover Page: 1 - The new cabinet;
2 - President congratulates Ranil Wickremesinghe after being sworn as Prime Minister;
3 - Rev Dr Baddegam Samitha, the first Buddhist monk to enter Parliament;
4 - 'Flame-thrower' weapons sold to Sri Lanka;
5 - R Sampanthan, leader of TULF/TNA

Politics of Cohabitation

The parliamentary election held in Sri Lanka on 5 December has been the most violent - thousands of recorded incidents of violence in which several hundreds have been injured and as many as 52 persons killed. Post-election violence compelled the authorities to impose curfews in many areas. Widespread incidents of vote-rigging and other forms of electoral malpractices have also been reported by independent election monitoring organisations. Despite these incidents and allegations, foreign election observers have concluded that by and large the election was "free and fair".

The outcome represented a crushing defeat for the ruling Peoples Alliance (PA) and a comprehensive victory for the United National Front (UNF) headed by the United National Party (UNP). The comprehensive nature of the UNF's victory is demonstrated by the fact that in all 17 electoral districts outside the Tamil dominated northern and eastern provinces, it secured substantially more votes than the PA.

Neither securing peace nor winning the war with its "war for peace" strategy, facing charges of economic mismanagement and corruption, deserted by its former allies - the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) - and debilitated by the defection of some leading figures from its own ranks, the PA went into a premature election fray forced upon it by the loss of its parliamentary majority with electoral defeat staring in its face. Its concentration on the single issue of an alleged secret pact between the UNP and the LTTE stoking up nationalist sentiments did not cut much ice with the electors.

On the other hand, the UNP was strengthened by its alliance with the CWC and other parties representing the Up-country Tamils, SLMC and the group of defectors from the PA, all contesting as a common alliance under the banner of the UNF. Though the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), a coalition of four Tamil parties, formed with the encouragement of the LTTE did not openly call upon the Tamils to vote for the UNP, the message given by the LTTE and the TNA was demonstrably clear enough for the overwhelming majority of them to vote for the UNF which promised resumption of peace negotiations with the LTTE.

Sri Lanka's constitutional set up is described as "Gaullist" because of its hybrid presidential and parliamentary character with an elected President in whom the executive power of the State is vested and a Parliament with elected Members who exercise legislative power. Preceding and immediately following the election, many commentators made ominous predictions of a constitutional crisis between President Chandrika Kumaratunga who led the PA and Ranil Wickremesinghe who headed the UNF into the election., but this has not transpired. Reluctantly and perhaps with saner counseling, the President did not assert the powers vested in her by the Constitution. She bowed to the popular mandate obtained by the new Prime Minister and did not stand in his way of appointing the cabinet of his own choosing thus sparing the country of the constitutional crisis that had been predicted. Political cohabitation between the President belonging to the party in opposition and the Prime Minister belonging to the party controlling Parliament would appear to have begun working. It may not be a relationship created between consenting parties, but one imposed upon them by the vagaries of the democratic process. It certainly is not be a political marriage made in heaven, but one hopes it does not turn out to be one that has been conceived in hell.

The formation of the TNA in the run-up to the election and its impressive performance securing 15 seats in Parliament, primarily representing the Tamils of the north and east of country, is perceived by many as a significant development. Its manifesto that proclaimed the LTTE as the sole representative of the Tamil people and demanded the ban imposed on it be lifted as a precondition for peace talks has given the TNA the image of being the political/parliamentary wing of the LTTE and its public political proxy. It is certain that in the coming period the TNA in Parliament and the LTTE outside will bring pressure upon the new government to fulfil TNA's manifesto commitment.

The UNF and its leader Ranil Wickremesinghe for their part promised to kick-start the now stalled Norwegian peace initiative thereby commencing negotiations with the LTTE. The UNF's manifesto also proposed the setting-up of an interim council to administer the war-torn north-east though the composition of such a council was not spelt out. If and when such a council is set up, whether the LTTE will agree to join it before its preconditions are met remains to be seen.

While there are other major economic and political problems facing the new government, there can be no doubt the most important single problem that it has to address is the ethnic question that has plagued the country for decades. How the new government will approach and deal with this issue and to what extent the LTTE will respond and reciprocate will determine the question of war and peace in Sri Lanka.

● The New Cabinet

The Cabinet of the newly elected United National Party (UNP) lead United National Front government was sworn in before President Chandrika Kumaratunga late afternoon on 12 December. The leader of the UNP, Ranil Wickremasinghe who led the UNF to victory in the election had already been sworn in as Prime Minister on Sunday 9 December.

The Cabinet consists of 25 Ministers including the Prime Minister. Another 28 Project Ministers were appointed who are not of cabinet rank but who would act independently with eight Deputy Ministers.

Before the Cabinet portfolios were allocated, it was reported that President Kumaratunga wanted to retain for herself the portfolios of Defence and Finance, but had reluctantly given way in the face of Ranil Wickremasinghe's persistence that he and his Front which had been given a popular mandate should be given a free hand to decide on the formation of the Cabinet.

Under the Constitution, the President will continue to remain the Executive President and will be entitled to chair Cabinet meetings. Whatever may be her constitutional position, in reality she will be compelled to play a diminished role.

The important portfolios of Finance and Defence went to two leading lawyers K. N. Choksy and Tilak Marapana respectively. Ranil Wickremasinghe in addition to being Prime Minister is the Minister of Policy Development and Implementation.

The Cabinet consists of the following: Ranil Wickremasinghe - Prime Minister and Minister of Policy Development and Implementation; K. N. Choksy - Finance; Tyrone Fernando - Foreign Affairs; Tilak Marapana - Defence; Karu Jayasuriya - Power & Energy; Gamini Atukorale - Transport; Highways & Aviation; Alick Aluvihare - Home Affairs, Provincial Councils and Local Government; M. H. Mohamed - Western Region Development; W. J. M. Lokubandara - Justice, Law Reform & National Integration and Buddha Sasana; Gamini Jayawickreme Perera - Irrigation and Water Management; P. Dayaratne - Health, Nutrition & Wel-

NEWS TRACK

fare; John Amaratunga - Interior; Gamini Lokuge - Tourism; S. B. Dissanayake - Agriculture & Livestock, and Samurdhi; G. L. Peiris - Enterprise Development, Industrial Policy and Investment Promotion, and Constitutional Affairs; Rauf Hakeem - Port Development & Shipping, and Eastern Development & Muslim Religious Affairs; Amara Piyaseeli Ratnayake - Women's Affairs; Ananda Kularatne - Southern Regional Development; Rukman Senanayake - Environment and Natural Resources; Arumugam. Thondaman - Housing & Plantation Infrastructure; Mahinda Wijesekera - Fisheries & Ocean Resources; Lakshman Kiriella - Plantation Industries; Tissa Attanayake - Central Region Development; Bandula Gunawardene - Rural Economy; A. R. M. A. Cader - Co-operatives.

● New Prime Minister Calls for Unity

Ranil Wickremasinghe shortly after being sworn in as Prime Minister on 9 December called for unity and an end to the divisive political culture that had plagued the country. "I am going to hold talks with all political party leaders in the next two days to discuss how we can work together, to find out areas where we agree. I will form the cabinet only after that" the PM told a gathering after attending religious ceremonies at the Gangarama temple in Hunupitiya.

The PM said that this may be a small step but a beginning of a journey to change the political culture in the country. "It may not be easy to change past practices immediately. But we must make a start" he declared.

He called on the armed forces and the police to maintain law and order. "Keep peace. Any person who breaks the law must be dealt with which ever political party he belonged to," the PM said. "A few incidents of post election violence have been reported and he condemned such action." The victory on December 5th was a victory for democ-

racy. People died, lost their property and faced violence. But they came and voted for democracy. I pledge to uphold democracy and my government will work in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the country," the Prime Minister said.

● Protest Over PA National List

A controversy has arisen within the People's Alliance over the manner in which the National List of MPs for the Alliance was prepared. Several leaders of political parties in the Alliance have expressed their serious concern over the omission of the leader of the Lanka Samasamaja Party.

Minister of Justice in the outgoing Cabinet, Batty Weerakoon hit out at those who were responsible for finalising the People's Alliance (PA) National List of MPs saying that they had not followed the proper procedure.

Perplexed and angered by his omission from the National List, Weerakoon, who is also the General Secretary of the LSSP which is a constituent party in the PA, said that he was astonished that such an arbitrary decision had been taken in leaving out the LSSP from the National List.

"There is always a procedure in doing things. The proper manner would have been for the People's Alliance Executive Committee to discuss the matter before the list was finalised. I have brought this to the notice of those concerned."

Weerakoon said he was not complaining that the LSSP had been left out but it should not be forgotten that they also threw their weight behind the People's Alliance campaign at the December 5 parliamentary election.

"How come Ajantha de Soysa who has hardly spoken a word while in the Southern Provincial Council has been accommodated in National List while a constituent party of the alliance has been left out?" he queried.

The veteran SLFP politician Alavi Moulana who was also dropped from PA National List refused to accept the post of being the Governor of the Western Provincial Council as an alternative.

● TNA Victory in North-East

The electoral performance of the

Tamil National Alliance (TNA), a four party coalition comprised of the TULF, ACTC, TELO and EPRLF (Premachandran Group), securing 15 parliamentary seats has been hailed as a reflection of the Tamil people's support for the LTTE and the cause of self-determination. The TNA contested the election under the TULF's banner with its "Rising Sun" symbol.

The TNA won in the Jaffna, Vanni and Batticaloa electoral districts. It came second in the Trincomalee district.

The TNA has named the veteran Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) leader, Mr. M. Sivasithamparam, as its National List MP. Mr. Sivasithamparam lives in Chennai and is reported to be unwell, but TULF officials said they hoped he would return and accept the nomination.

Of the elected TNA candidates, six belong to the TULF. They are: Joseph Parajasingham, V. Anandasangaree and Mavai Senathirajah, who were in the last Parliament as well, the Mayor of Jaffna, Mr. Raviraj, from the peninsula, Mr. R. Sampanthan from Trincomalee and Mr. Chandra Nehru from Ampara. Together with Mr. Sivasithamparam's nomination, the TULF has a total of seven seats in this Parliament.

The Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) has four members. They are M.K. Shivajilingam from Jaffna and Thangavadivel from Batticaloa and Selvam Adaikalanathan and Rajakumaran from the Vanni district.

Three of the TNA winners are from the All-Ceylon Tamil Congress: Mr. Vinayagamoorthy and Gajendran Ponnambalam from Jaffna and Vallimalai from Batticaloa.

The Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF)-Suresh group, managed one seat from the Vanni, which has gone to Sivasakthi Shanmugham.

The TNA's arch rival, the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) leader, Mr. Douglas Devananda, has also been re-elected from Jaffna. The party has won only one other seat in Jaffna and none elsewhere in the north-east.

Dharmalingam Sithadthan, leader of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) has also scraped through to Parliament from Vanni with one seat.

"The elections have proved beyond all reasonable doubt that the Tamil people are solidly behind the Liberation Tigers. The results are also an endorsement that the Tamils are a distinct nation and that they have the right to self-determination. The Tamils have endorsed that the Liberation Tigers are their sole representatives," Mr. Joseph Parajasingham TNA MP for Batticaloa said.

Following the election, the TNA said that it had no interest in the formation of the new government. "We will do nothing to derogate from the verdict of the Sinhalese in the south. But we will not allow ourselves to be manipulated in anyway. Beyond this we have no interest in the formation of the new government," said Mr. Rajavarothiam Sampanthan, MP for Trincomalee and a senior leader of the TNA.

Mr. Sampanthan, who is also leader of the Tamil United Liberation Front, warned "If the political establishment doesn't take on the Tamil problem with urgency and resolve it, we are going to make ourselves ungovernable in our areas. We will use peaceful means. And we will do that to the hilt with the complete backing of our people."

"We expect the Sinhala political parties to negotiate only with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on the basis of a Sinhala consensus with third party international mediation. There can be no resolution to the Tamil national question without a Sinhala consensus," Mr. Sampanthan said.

"Both major political parties should come with a solution to the Tamil national question instead of saying that they are prepared for talks with all concerned. We shall make every effort both in and out parliament to actively pursue the goals that we have defined in the Tamil National Alliance manifesto," he added.

Sampanthan reminded newly appointed Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe that "the government should first declare ceasefire, lift the ban on the LTTE enabling it to participate in peace talks as the sole representative of Tamils and such peace talks should be held only with the LTTE through international third party mediation, according to TNA manifesto."

● Ratnasiri Opposition Leader

The defeated Peoples Alliance at its group meeting has unanimously de-

cided to appoint former Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake as the Opposition Leader. Previously it was reported that Mr Anura Bandaranaike and Mr Mahinda Rajapakse were to contest for the post.

At the gorup meeting, President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga in her capacity as PA leader had said that Anura Bandaranaike and Mahinda Rajapakse were suitable for the post of Opposition Leader. However, she had proposed the name of former Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, saying he was the most suitable person to be the Opposition Leader at this moment. Thereafter, nobody had objected to Wickremanayake's appointment.

The Group also resolved to support the decision not to accept the invitation of the UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe to the PA to be a partner in a Government of National Reconciliation. However some reports indicated that some of the PA Members of Parliament were in support of joining such a government and critical of the decision to reject the UNP leader's invitation.

● Nine Women MPs

Nine women MPs have been elected to the 12th Parliament of Sri Lanka. Four of them are from the UNF while another four are from the PA. The JVP also has a woman representative.

Seven of the nine women MPs have gained re-election after being in the eleventh Parliament. Two new faces have also been elected for the 12th Parliament. Two of the nine women MPs are Muslims.

Out of a total of about 4000 candidates who contested the recent general election 115 were women candidates. The highest number of preferential votes have been won by Ms. Pavithra Devi Vanniarachchi of the (PA).

The newly appointed women MPs from the UNF are Chandrani Bandara (Anuradhapura), Amara Piyaseeli Ratnayake (Kurunegala), Larine Perera (Puttalam) and Chitra Manthilake (Kandy). The women MPs from the PA are Pavithra Devi Vanniarachchi (Ratnapura), Sumedha G. Jayasena (Moneragala), Soma Kumari Tennakoon (Kurunegala) and Mallika De Mel Lakshmi (Matara). Anjan Umma from JVP.

However, Centre for Monitoring Election Violence said the number of

women MPs elected is insufficient to represent women in Sri Lanka who constitute 51 percent of the total population. Women representation in Parliament has not exceeded 5 percent yet.

● First Ever Buddhist Monk Enters Parliament

The first ever Buddhist monk, in the history of Sri Lanka's over fifty years of parliamentary democracy, has been elected to the twelfth parliament.

Entering the record books, Ven. Dr. Baddegama Samitha a Buddhist monk was elected as a Member of parliament from the Baddegama electorate in the Galle District when he obtained 42,120 preferential votes on the PA ticket causing a "poser" in the code of attire within the august House.

While democracy dictates that no one can be barred from entering parliament if the people have chosen to elect him or her, there are two other questions however that could be asked.

How will he dress himself? The rules of parliament demand that members be properly clad and a precedent was created when Srimani Athulathmudali had undergone an operation when she was a minister in the first PA Cabinet and could not wear a saree to the House.

She sought permission from Speaker K.B. Ratnayake to enter the House clad in a western styled dress which was normally regarded as 'wanting.' The then Speaker allowed her request.

In the case of the Buddhist religious orders many are the times that their members sit in the gallery and listen to proceedings respectfully covering their arms that are otherwise bare. Parliament's former Secretary General Sam Wijesinghe, an expert on these matters of protocol and dress said, "Parliamentary procedure dictates that all members stand to honour the Speaker or members who replace the Speaker when they enter or leave the well of the House.

This could be contrary to the rules of the Maha Sangha where monks do not rise from their seats in respect to anyone else. He had a solution to the problem: "Ven. Baddegama Samitha Thera will either enter the well of the House after the Speaker sits in his chair or leave the well before he does so thus avoiding having to stand like other members."

● Elections Basically Free and Fair, say US & EU

In spite of allegations of widespread violence and electoral malpractices, the European Union election monitors and the US State Department have stated that the elections held on 5 December was "basically free and fair."

The United States on 7 December condemned the violence during the Sri Lankan elections, and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. The State Department said however, the result of the polls was "basically free and fair." The head of the EU Electoral Observation Mission to Sri Lanka, John Cushnahan in a statement also condemned the violence as well as the blocking by the army of large numbers of Tamils from voting, but also endorsed the overall election result.

"Based on what we know now, the reports we have, the election appears to have been basically free and fair in most parts of Sri Lanka," said spokesman Mr. Reeker when asked to comment on the Sri Lankan elections at the State Department's daily press briefing 7 December.

"We do understand that violence, as I indicated, and some irregularities may have undermined the conduct of the election in some localities... But it appears that the major parties are accepting the election results as the will of the Sri Lankan people."

"We want to condemn the many incidents of violence, especially the killing of 10 Sri Lanka Muslim Congress supporters in Kandy on election day, and we call for the perpetrators of those acts to be brought to justice," said Mr. Reeker.

John Cushnahan in a statement lamented the "murders, intimidation and violence experienced in some parts of the country" and said, "Unfortunately some people were denied the right to vote either because the army closed checkpoints or their votes were stolen or they were denied access to the polling station because of the existence of armed thugs."

"Despite the problems that voters faced it would seem that the result reflects the political will of the people who clearly wanted change. The next government of Sri Lanka must be appointed in accord with the democratically expressed wishes of the voters. To ignore

this principle would be to undermine democracy itself."

With regards to the disruption of the results in the Tamil north and East, the EU observed: "The decision of the army to close checkpoints at Vavuniya and Batticaloa prevented many thousands of people from exercising their right to vote. It would seem that there is no justification for this action and serious questions have to be raised about the political motivation behind it."

The EU also said: "We intend to monitor the progress of investigations into the many incidents of violence that occurred."

● Challenge Against Being Shut Out of Ceremony

Some media organisations have reacted strongly against being shut out from covering the swearing-in ceremony of Ranil Wickremesinghe as Prime Minister at President's House on Sunday 9 December.

In addition to the letter of demand sent by the Chairman TNL, a TV company owned by family members of the new Prime Minister, to K. Balapatabendi, the Secretary to President for not permitting some media personnel to attend the ceremony, three media institutions TNL, Ravaya, Sunday Leader concerned had decided to file a fundamental rights case in the Supreme Court.

The Chairman of the TNL Shan Wickremesinghe that this decision was taken by the three media organisations as their reporters and photographers were not given permission to proceed beyond the President's House gate which they alleged was made on the directives of the Secretary to the President and the head of the Presidential Security Division (PSD) Nihal Karunaratne.

TNL through its lawyers has sent a letter of demand stating that the 'act is illegal, unlawful and with express malice and ultra vires the function of your office and therefore have been done in your personal capacity. Thereby you have caused loss and damages to our client's reputation and goodwill'.

It further states that 'We are instructed to demand from you and hereby demand from you a sum of Rs. one hundred million as damage to our clients, loss of reputation and goodwill and the same should be paid within 30 days from receipt of the letter. Failure of

which we are instructed to institute action to recover the same'.

● Astrologers Go Underground

Sri Lankan seers who predicted a victory for President Chandrika Kumaratunga's party were in hiding as the election results as the man they wrote off as a loser was sworn in as the country's new Prime Minister.

A panel of astrologers had gone on state-television just before the elections to announce a resounding return to power by the People's Alliance (PA).

But the figures predicted by the astrologers were astronomically wrong. The astrologer who led the panel, Priyantha Ratnayake, was unavailable for comment and his whereabouts became unknown after attackers smashed windows of his office as vote results were announced.

The astrologers were accused of rigging their forecasts to favour the political parties they supported. With opinion polling still in its infancy in Sri Lanka, seers reap cosmic sums, especially during election time when they are in great demand and their predictions are believed to influence undecided voters. However, and perhaps predictably, astrologers hardly agreed on the outcome of elections and this year their battles were out in the open amid allegations of bribe-taking and forecast fixing.

Astrologer Vijayasri Jayasinghe, quit his job with Ratnayake's Ira Handa (Sun and Moon) publication saying he could not play with planetary positions and make forecasts against his "science".

"The publisher (Priyantha Ratnayake) is making predictions in favour of the government," Jayasinghe said, claiming his predictions favoured the main opposition UNP. "My credibility is at stake," Jayasinghe said before pro-government thugs hounded him underground. Ratnayake dismissed the dis-senting editor as a "casual contributor" who had been bribed by the now ascendant UNP, but it was later revealed Ratnayake had accepted a job from the People's Alliance government to head a lucrative state corporation.

● Body Count Sets Record In bloodiest ballot

Sri Lanka's recently concluded par-

liamentary election was the country's bloodiest, claiming 46 lives during a five-week campaign and with unprecedented violence on polling day, the election chief said on 8 December.. Chief Election Commissioner Dayananda Dissanayake said police received some 2,233 complaints of campaign-related violence in the past five weeks and on voting day, 5 December.

The main opposition United National Party (UNP) which won the vote and was set to form a government said that the violence and vote rigging reduced its margin of victory.

"I have never seen an election campaign so violent," Dissanayake said, urging political parties to take immediate action to end the culture of violence in politics.

Sixty-five people were killed during last year's elections, but that figure included 35 who died in the suicide bomb attacks carried out by the Tamil Tigers. All 46 deaths cited by Dissanayake in this year's vote were from clashes among political rivals.

Dissanayake also lamented that the government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga had tried to intimidate and bring pressure on him as he tried to hold a free and fair election. In an unprecedented move, the government publicly charged that Dissanayake was trying to support the UNP, in allegations the elections chief said were "totally false and without any foundation." "Instead of receiving support, I had to face several obstacles," Dissanayake said in an obvious reference to his battle with police chief Lucky Kodituwakku who refused to cooperate with the polls chief.

Violent incidents continued even after the elections and in the following days in some parts of the country forcing the authorities to impose several hours of curfew in many areas. The defeated Peoples Alliance complained that its supporters and their property were being subjected violence by the supporters of the victorious UNP.

● Lohan Ratwatte Flees Sri Lanka

Lohan Ratwatte, son of former Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte reportedly left Sri Lanka on Emirates Airlines flight number EK 815 departing from Colombo at 0045 hrs SLT bound for Male on 7 December..

Reports from Colombo said Lohan fled the Island after it was confirmed that a new government led by the United National Party had won the December 5th election and his father Anuruddha Ratwatte was to lose his ministerial position.

Lohan reportedly left with his wife and two children. Many charges of thugery, voter intimidation, ballot rigging and murder have been levelled against Lohan Ratwatte by residents of the Kandy district. Rauf Hazeer, brother of Rauf Hakeem and Leader for the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress has alleged that Lohan Ratwatte's gang shot dead at point blank range ten supporters of the SLMC on December 5 evening at Udathalawila - Kandy, an hour after polling had concluded.

Angered by the murders, Muslim protesters in Wattagama, Kandy, demanded the arrest of the Lohan Ratwatte for the alleged killing of 10 Muslims. They came in procession and demanded police make the arrest for the murders. The victims were killed inside the van in which they traveling, giving protection to ballot boxes after the poll was closed.

● LTTE Resumes Attacks in the East

As those in Colombo were busy in connection with the swearing in of the new UNP-led government, LTTE fighters launched surprise attacks on two main security points in the Eastern region, killing at least 12 people and wounding more than 25 from both sides on 11 December night.

The Defence Ministry said the first incident, an attempt by a group of about 30-40 LTTE cadres to overrun the Army detachment at Pahala Thoppur, south of Muttur in the Trincomalee district, was thwarted by security forces. In the confrontation three soldiers were killed and twelve more soldiers were wounded.

Initially, the rebels captured one of the nearby Army bunkers but later it was cleared by security forces. Security Forces directed artillery and mortar fire towards the fleeing fighters while they were withdrawing towards the jungle area to the southeast of Pahala Thoppur. Initial Tiger transmissions confirmed six rebels killed and more than ten cadres injured in the incident.

(continued on next page)

UK Dealers Sell 'Vacuum Bombs' to Sri Lanka

Jamie Wilson and Bob Crew

British arms dealers have used a loophole in British law secretly to sell fuel-air weapons for use against Tamil Tiger insurgents in Sri Lanka, the Guardian can reveal. Human rights groups have called for such weapons, which are also known as vacuum bombs, to be banned. The force of fuel-air blasts can burst eyeballs out of their sockets and crush other internal organs. Brokering arms sales from Britain in this way without a UK export licence is not illegal but is due to become so under laws first promised by Labour in 1996. The export control bill has still not been passed and Britain continues to be one of the arms dealing centres of the world.

The sale, which took place in June, was of 1,000 shoulder-launched rockets with fuel-air warheads, a unique Russian design built for use by Soviet forces against mojahedin fighters hiding in caves in Afghanistan. The fuel-air weapons were also reported to have been fired by Russian soldiers in an assault on Grozny, Chechnya, in 1999. In the recent past the British government has refused export licences for weapons to the Sri Lankan government. According to the latest Amnesty International report both sides in the conflict have bombed and shelled indiscriminately and taken too little care to avoid civilian casualties. Menzies Campbell, the Liberal Democrat foreign affairs spokesman, said yesterday: "This emphasises the need for the early passing

into law of the export controls bill which would almost certainly have prevented these sales from taking place. The nature of these weapons is so dreadful that they ought to be governed by an international convention such as the kind which outlawed the use of soft-nosed bullets and banned landmines." The Sri Lankan military have received at least two secret shipments of the RPO-A Schmel Bumblebee rockets.

The facts emerged only because parties to the latest shipment fell out over sharing the profits, amid allegations of bribery and sharp practice. In documents supplied to the Sri Lankan government, the British arms firm calls itself Gladstone Industrial Holdings Ltd. and has a London address. This title conceals an apparently derelict shopfront in Catford, south London, occupied by Robert Kweku Hanson, who owns a small commodities company, Premier Distribution (UK and Europe) Ltd., and lives in a modest semi in Orpington, Kent. Hanson, who is not willing to comment, appears to be little more than a front. Nor is Gladstone a British company - it is registered in the Caribbean island of Grenada, a secretive offshore tax haven blacklisted by the intergovernmental Financial Action Task Force. The trail of ownership goes back to two men. One is a director of a garment company which supplies Marks & Spencer, the other an arms dealer in north London with a selection of old Soviet and modern Russian military stock for sale.

Rapierbase Ltd. - the arms dealership - is controlled by a British subject, Ameer Temour, who lives in a large house in Chase Side, Southgate, north London, with a Rolls-Royce parked in the forecourt. In the early 1990s he gained contracts to dismantle rusting Soviet-era weaponry in the new republics of Belarus and Ukraine, briefly working with the big US arms firm Alliant Technosystems. He now offers arms for sale ranging from Kalashnikov assault rifles to T90 tanks. He also advertises consignments of wheat from Kazakhstan and cartons of cigarettes

from Pakistan. His partner, whose connections clinched the deal with Sri Lanka, was a former army officer there, Lieutenant-Colonel Upali Gajanayake. He is a director of a company which assembles garments for Marks & Spencer. The consignment of fuel-air rocket launchers they obtained was old Ukrainian military stock, flown directly to Sri Lanka by cargo plane.

Documents seen by The Guardian show that the Sri Lankan army was originally promised up to date 1999 weapons from the manufacturers in Tula, Russia, and not the 1989-91 Ukrainian models they received. But the Sri Lankan government said this week the weapons had been 'refurbished.' Sri Lankan army officers demanded bribes to authorise the deal, according to Temour, who fell out with his colleague over money and was eventually thrown off the Gladstone board. Such bribery would be illegal under the anti-terrorism proposals announced but also not yet enacted by the British government. The Sri Lankan government said it was investigating these claims, which were denied by three army officers, including the army commander himself, Lieutenant-General Lionel Balagalle, who called them 'wild allegations.' The Gladstone board in a statement issued through another director, a South African based in Capetown, Mahendrun Munsamy, also denied paying bribes "whether to officers in Sri Lanka or Ukrainian officials."

The Sri Lanka government handed over \$3.6m to Gladstone for the shipment of rockets, via the Bank of Ceylon in London, paid into a Liechtenstein account at Vervaltung bank, Liechtenstein, like Grenada, is a well known 'black hole' for secretive funds. Temour's solicitor, Michael Lawson, said: "No British export licence would have been required." However, the bill will outlaw such unlicensed sales. It was promised after the 1996 Scott report on arms sales to Iraq, and the 1994 scandal in which arms for Rwanda were brokered by London dealers, through an Isle of Man offshore company, Miltech. Sarath de Silva, deputy chairman of Tristar Apparel, the Marks & Spencer sub-contractors in Sri Lanka, said the company was engaged in legal action to remove Col. Gajanayake from his post on the Tristar board for bringing the firm into disrepute. The colonel denies any wrongdoing..

(November 23, 2001, The Guardian)

(Continued from page 7)

In the Batticaloa district the Police Station at Valachchenai came under LTTE attack yesterday, destroying the telecommunication equipment installed at the police station.

Following this attack on vital equipment, all communication connections to and from Valachchenai areas were disrupted and disconnected, causing inconvenience to civilians, who are largely Muslims. Reports confirmed that three policemen were killed and six others badly injured following this attack. Three women police constables were among the casualties.

GENERAL ELECTION 2001

Key to political party names : United National Party (UNP); People's Alliance (PA); Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP); Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF); Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC); Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP); Sihala Urumaya (SU); New Left Front (NLF); Democratic People's Liberation Front (DPLF-PLOTE); United Socialist party (USP); National Democratic Party (NDP); Democratic Left Front (DLF); United Lalith Front (ULF); Eksath Sinhala Maha Sabha (ESMS);

Muslim United Liberation Front (MULF); Sinhala Mahasam-matha Bhoomiputra Pakshaya (SMBP); Jathika Sangwardhena Peramuna (JSP); People's Freedom Front (PFF); Liberal Party (LP); Ruhunu Janatha Party (RJP); Democratic United National Front (DUNF); Sri Lanka Progressive Front (SLPF); Sri Lanka Muslim Katchi (SLMK); Sri Lanka National Front (SLNF); Socialist Equality Party (SEP); Eksath Lanka Podhujana Pakshaya (ELPP); Independent Groups (Ind.Grp. 1-7)

Total Registered Voters: 12,428,762

Total Polled: 9,449,813 (76.03%)

Valid Votes: 8,955,869 (94.77%)

Rejected Votes: 493,944 (5.22%)

Votes and seats obtained by political parties

Party	Votes	Percentage of Votes	District Seats	National List	Total Seats
UNP	4,086,026	45.62%	96	13	109
PA	3,330,815	37.19%	66	11	77
JVP	815,353	9.10%	13	3	16
TULF	348,164	3.89%	14	1	15
SLMC	105,346	1.18%	4	1	5
EPDP	72,783	0.81%	2	—	2
SU	50,665	0.57%	—	—	—
NLF	45,901	0.51%	—	—	—
DPLF-PLOT	16,669	0.19%	1	—	1
USP	9,455	0.11%	—	—	—
NDP	6,952	0.08%	—	—	—
DLF	6,214	0.07%	—	—	—
ULF	3,851	0.04%	—	—	—
ESMS	2,771	0.03%	—	—	—
MULF	2,644	0.03%	—	—	—
SMBP	1,630	0.02%	—	—	—
JSP	1,624	0.02%	—	—	—
PFF	1,361	0.02%	—	—	—
LP	1,152	0.01%	—	—	—
RJP	1,089	0.01%	—	—	—
DUNF	978	0.01%	—	—	—
SLPF	854	0.01%	—	—	—
SLMK	802	0.01%	—	—	—
SLNF	719	0.01%	—	—	—
SEP	243	0.00%	—	—	—
ELPP	56	0.00%	—	—	—
Total Seats			196	29	225

Those Most Preferred

Candidates who polled over 100,000 preferential votes

Ranil Wickremesinghe	415,686
Anura Bandaranaike	265,160
Karu Jayasuriya	250,912
Keheliya Rambukwella	143,235
Gamini Jayawickreme Perera	141,702
Gamini Athukorala	140,045
Milinda Moragoda	134,132
Ravi Karunanayake	129,893
Arumugam Thondaman	121,542

P.Chandrasekaran	121,421
Ratnasiri Wickremanayake	120,432
Dr. Jayalath Jayawardane	116,737
Johnston Fernando	114,845
Vajira Abeywardane	110,055
Mahinda Samarasinghe	108,583
Muttu Sivalingam	107,338
Mangala Samaraweera	105,992
A.H.M. Fowzie	103,817
Dr. Rajitha Senaratne	102,919
Anuruddha Ratwatte	102,906
Susantha Punchinilame	101,033

How they performed in the Jaffna District

Five former parliamentarians have won their seats while four have failed to retain their seats from the Jaffna district. TULF candidates V. Anandasangaree and Mavai Senathirajah as well as All Ceylon Tamil Congress candidate A. Vinayagamoorthy, EPDP candidate Douglas Devananda and UNP candidate T. Maheswaran have been re-elected while S. Sivathasan, S. Thavarajah and K. V. Guhendran of EPDP as well as S. Sivamaharajah of TULF have failed to garner enough votes to be re-elected. G. G. Gajendrakumar, the son of slain ACTC leader Kumar Ponnampalam, and N. Mathanarajah of EPDP have been newly elected.

The preferential votes the elected candidates secured are as follows:-

V. Anandasangaree (TULF) - 36,217; Mavai Senathirajah

(TULF) - 33,831; G. G. Gajendrakumar (ACTC) - 29,641; A. Vinayagamoorthy (ACTC) - 19,472; N. Raviraj (TULF) - 19,263; K. Sivajilingam (TELO) - 17,859; T. Maheswaran (UNP) - 11,598; Douglas Devananda (EPDP) - 9,744; N. Mathanarajah (EPDP) - 7,350.

Non-elected candidates preference votes are as follows:-

C. V. K. Sivagnanam (ACTC) - 15,513; Suresh Premachandran (EPRLF) - 13,302; S. Aravinthan (TULF) - 12,582; S. Sivamaharajah (former TULF MP) - 11,296; K. Chandrarasa (TULF) - 10,514; G. Thangavel (TULF) - 5,869; Sri Rangeswaran - 3,283; Manipallavarajah - 2,786; K. V. Guhendran (former MP) - 2,514; N. Thiruloganathan - 1,434; K. Balanadaraja Iyer - 1,286; S. Baskaran - 963; Ms Mahewari Velautham - 861; P. Seevaratnam - 601; S. Thavarajah (former MP) - 542 and S. Sivathasan (former MP) - 380, all of EPDP candidates.

ELECTION 2001

Elected and National List MPs

The following is the list of National List MPs nominated by the political parties and 196 members elected at the general elections held on 5 December and the preference votes they received. It is reported that the JVP is likely to replace some of its elected members with new nominees.

National list MPs

UNP - 13 seats

1. K.N. Choksy
2. Thilak Marapone
3. G.L. Peiris
4. S.B. Dissanayake
5. A.R.M.A. Cadar
6. A.H.M. Azwer
7. Jayasundera Wijekoon
8. M.S.M. Salman
9. A.L.M. Hajrath
10. M.S. Tahwfeeqe
11. R. Yogarajan
12. P.P. Radhakrishnan
13. M.M.M. Musthapa

PA - 11 seats

14. D.M. Jayaratne
15. Lakshman Kadirgamar
16. Ronnie de Mel
17. M.H. Segu Izzadeen
18. S. Sathasivam
19. Raja Collure
20. Dilan Perera
21. Vadivel Puthrasigamanee
22. Athula N Jayasinghe
23. Mahinda Amaraweera
24. Ajantha de Soyza

JVP - 3 seats

15. Anura Dissanayake
26. Ramalingam Chandrashekar
27. S.K. Subasinghe

SLMC - 1 seat

28. A.A.M. Bawa

TULF - 1 seat

29. M. Sivasithambaram

Western Province Colombo District

UNP: (12)

30. Ranil Wickremesinghe (415,686)
31. Milinda Moragoda (134,132)
32. Ravi Karunanayake (129,893)
33. Mohomed Maharoof (85,988)
34. Karunasena Kodituwakku (78,093)
35. Gamini Lokuge (66,968)
36. Bandula Gunawardhane (66,516)
37. M.H. Mohamed (64,783)
38. Mano Ganeshan (54,942)
39. Jayantha Ketagoda (54,274)
40. Tyrone Fernando (46,129)
41. Lilantha Perera (43,887)

PA: (7)

42. A.H.M. Fowzie (103,817)
43. Arjuna Ranatunge (97,409)
44. Susil Premajayantha (90,170)
45. Dinesh Gunawardhane (87,615)
46. Jeevan Kumaratunge (70,790)
47. Lakshman Premachandra (61,530)
48. Chandana Kathiriarachchi (57,673)

JVP: (2)

49. Sunil Handunneththi
50. Wimal Weerawansa

Kalutara District

UNP: (5)

51. Mahinda Samarasinghe (108,583)

52. Dr. Rajitha Senaratne (102,919)

53. Imtiaz Bakeer Markar (89,147)

54. P.D. Abeyratne (52,414)

55. Lakshman Wijemanne (45,766)

PA: (4)

56. Ratnasiri Wickremenayake (120,432)
57. Kumara Welgama (81,597)
58. Tudor Dayaratne (55,181)
59. Rohitha Abeygunawardhane (46,571)

JVP: (1)

60. Nandana Gunathilleke (8,312)

Gampaha District

UNP: (9)

61. Karu Jayasuriya (250,912)
62. Jayalath Jayawardane (116,737)
63. Joseph Michael Perera (86,959)
64. John Amaratunga (82,326)
65. Olitha Premathiratne (81,302)
66. Suranimala Rajapakse (70,667)
67. Edward Gunasekera (60,861)
68. Sarachchandra Rajakaruna (60,776)
69. Ravindra Randeniya (56,449)

PA: (7)

70. Anura Bandaranaike (265,160)
71. Jeyaraj Fernandopulle (95,561)
72. Pandu Bandaranayake (78,614)
73. Felix Perera (73,029)
74. Sarana Gunawardhane (59,420)
75. Reggie Ranatunge (52,031)
76. Neil Rupasinghe (48,162)

JVP: (2)

77. Wjitha Herath
 78. Anjan Umma
- Central Province

Kandy District

UNP: (7)

79. Keheliya Rambukwella (143,235)
80. Tissa Attanayake (99,381)
81. A.H.M. Haleem (75,630)
82. Rauff Hakeem (71,094)



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83 Lakshman Kiriella (70,241)
84 Chitra Manthilake (51,768)
85 Lucky Jayawardene (45,690)

PA: (4)

86 Anuruddha Ratwatte (102,906)
87 Dr. Sarath Amunugama (78,110)
88 Thilina Bandara Tennakoon (51,542)
89 Mahindananda Aluthgamage (50,618)

JVP: (1)

90 Dimuthu Bandara Abeykoon (5,957)

Nuwara Eliya District

UNP: (5)

91 Arumugam Thondaman (121,542)
92 P. Chandrasekaran (121,421)
93 Muttu Sivalingam (107,338)
94 Naveen Dissanyake (74,894)
95 K.K. Piyadasa (54,206)

PA: (2)

96 C.B. Ratnayake (49,673)
97 D.M.S.K. Dassanayake (35,504)

Matale District

UNP: (3)

98 Alick Aluvihare (79,620)
99 Ranjith Aluvihare (72,953)

100 Sanjeeva Kaviratne (37,226)

PA: (2)

101 Bandara Tennakoon (49,959)
102 Bandula S.B. Yalgama (35,450)

**Southern Province
Matara District**

UNP: (4)

103 Mahinda Wijesekera (95,378)
104 Lakshman Abeywardhane (81,612)
105 Justin Galappathi (60,548)
106 Sagala Gajendra Ratnayaka (57,423)

PA: (3)

107 Mangala Samaraweera (105,992)
108 Mahinda Abeywardhane (64,756)
109 Mallika de Mel (60,531)

JVP: (1)

110 Jinadasa Kitulegoda (4,799)

Galle District

UNP: (5)

111 Vajira Abeywardhane (110,055)
112 Hemakumara Nanayakkara 78,590)
113 Gayantha Karunathileke (64,257)
114 Ananda Abeywickrama (50,772)
115 Jayantha Jayaweera (49,667)

PA::(4)

116 Amarasiri Dodangoda (78,697)
117 Richard Pathirane (72,737)
118 Piyasena Gamage (54,570)
119 Ven. Baddegama Samitha (42,120)

JVP: (1)

120. Indika Weerakoon - (2,938)

Hambantota District

UNP: (4)

121 Sajith Premadasa (92,536)
122 Dilip Wedaarachchi (38,972)
123 Siri Andrahennadi (26,644)
124 Ananda Kularatne (24,811)

PA: (2)

125 Mahinda Rajapakse (81,855)
126 Chamal Rajapakse (48,473)

JVP: (1)

127 Nihal Galappathi (4,514)

**North Western Province
Puttalam: District**

UNP:(4)

128 Palitha Range Bandara (69,167)
129 Neomal Perera (59,805)
130 Mary Larine Perera (46,043)
131 Sugath Tissera (36,218)

PA: (3)

- 132 D.M. Dasanayake (47,100)
133 Milroy Fernando (35,128)
134 Dayasritha Tissera (32,457)

Kurunegala District**UNP: (8)**

- 135 G. Jayawickrama Perera (141,702)
136 Johnston Fernando (114,845)
137 Indika Bandaranayake (69,513)
138 Rohitha Bogollagama (60,576)
139 D.M. Bandaranayake (52,802)
140 Upali Piyasoma (50,963)
141 A. Piyaseeli Ratnayake (50,963)
142 Anura Gopallawa (48,672)

PA: (6)

- 143 S.B. Nawinna (78,718)
144 Salinda Dissanayake (69,963)
145 A. Priyadarshana Yapa (67,717)
146 Jayaratne Herath (47,471)
147 T.B. Ekanayake (43,994)
148 Somakumari Tennakoon (42,918)

JVP: (1)

- 149 Bimal Ratnayake

North Central Province:
Anuradhapura District

UNP: (4)

- 150 P. Harrison (69,878)
151 Chandrani Bandara (54,969)
152 W.B. Ekanayake (51,373)
153 Dharmapriya Gamage (36,609)

PA: (3)

- 154 Duminda Dissanayake (76,088)
155 S.M. Chandrasena (38,090)
156 Tissa Karaliyadda (35,608)

JVP: (1)

- 157 K.D. Lalkantha (4,304)

Polonnaruwa District**UNP: (3)**

- 158 Earl Gunasekera (57,957)
159 H.G.P. Nelson (41,822)
160 Sidney Jayaratne (28,109)

PA: (2)

- 161 Maithreepala Sirisena (52,442)
162 A. Sarath Kumara (40,384)

Uva Province:**Badulla District:****UNP: (5)**

- 163 W.J.M. Lokubandara (80,543)
164 Lakshman Seneviratne (46,792)
165 Ravindra Samaraweera (44,742)
166 Upali Samaraweera (43,228)

167 K. Velayudan (40,753)

PA: (3)

- 168 Nimal Siripala de Silva (85,273)
169 S.A.R. Maddumabandara (36,708)
170 D.D.W. Wickremaratne (33,512)

Moneragala District**UNP: (2)**

- 171 R. Maddumabandara (38,474)
172 Ananda Kumarasiri (37,567)

PA: (3)

- 173 Jagath Pushpakumara (32,754)
174 Wijith Wijemuni Zoysa (30,724)
175 Sumedha Jayasena (30,239)

Sabaragamuwa Province
Kegalle District

UNP: (5)

- 176 Rukman Senanayake (73,594)
177 C. D. Premadasa (57,249)
178 Kabeer Hashim (53,406)
179 Jayathilake Podinilame (46,769)
180 R.A.D. Sirisena (44,627)

PA: (3)

- 181 Mahipala Herath (70,934)
182 Athauda Seneviratne (56,290)
183 R. Siyambalapitiya (40,290)

JVP: (1)

- 184 Gamini Ratnayake (3,631)

Ratnapura District**UNP: (5)**

- 185 Gamini Athukorale (140,054)
186 Susantha Punchinilame (101,033)
187 Mahinda Ratnathilake (58,265)
188 A.A. Wijetunge (43,081)
189 P. Abeynayake (38,655)

PA: (4)

- 190 Pavithra Wanniarachchi (84,173)
191 Premalal Jayasekera (79,742)
192 John Seneviratne (64,685)
193 Ashoka Jayawardhane (37,442)

JVP: (1)

- 194 Achala Suranga Jagoda (2,617)

Eastern Province:
Trincomalee District

UNP: (2)

195. Maharoof Mohommed (25,264)
196. K.M. Thowfeek (24,847)

TULF: (1)

197. R. Sampanthan (40,110)

PA: (1)

198. M.K.S. Gunawardena (14,911)

Batticaloa District**TULF: (3)**

199. T. Thangavadiwel (24,475)
200. G. Krishnapillai (20,675)
201. J. Pararajasingham (20,279)

SLMC: (1)

202. M. Abdul Cader (17,497)

PA: (1)

203. MLAM. Hisbullah (19,787)

Digamadulla District**SLMC: (3)**

- 204 M.H.M. Athaullah (35,523)
205 Habeeb Mohomed (34,798)
206 A I Mohomed Ismail (23,718)

PA: (2)

- 207 Ferial Ashraff (28,802)
208 A.K. Thewarapperuma (26,361)

UNP: (1)

- 209 P. Dayaratne (42,301)

TULF: (1)

- 210 C. Ariyanayagam (26,282)

Northern Province
Jaffna District

TULF: (6)

- 211 V. Anandasangaree (36,217)
212 S. M. Senathiraja (33,831)
213 G.G. Ponnambalam (29,614)
214 A. Vinayagamoorthy (19,472)
215 Nadarajah Raviraj (19,472)
216 M.K. Sivajilingam (17,859)

EPDP: (2)

217. Douglas Devananda (9,744)
218 N. Mathanarasa (7,350)

UNP: (1)

219. T. Maheswaran (11,598)

Wanni District**TULF: (3)**

220. S. Adikkalanadan (28,548)
221. Raja Kuganeswaran (15,936)
222. N S. Anandan (14,023)

UNP: (2)

223. Noordeen Mashoor (12,673)
224. A R Bathiutheen (9,276)

PLOTE: (1)

225. T Sitharthan (4,468)

LTTE Leader Spells Out Terms for Peace Talks

For the LTTE, as the legitimate, authentic representatives of the Tamil people, to participate in any peace talks with the Government, lifting of the ban imposed on the organisation by Sri Lanka was a necessary pre-requisite. The Tamil people wanted to live in their traditional lands with peace and dignity, determining their own political and economic life. It is the basic political aspiration of the Tamil people. This is neither separatism nor terrorism. It does not constitute a threat to the Sinhala people. The Tamil people favour a political solution that would enable them to live in their own lands with the right to rule themselves. This is what the Tamils mean when they emphasise that a political solution should be based on the right to self-determination. Mr. Velupillai Pirapaharan, the leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said in his annual "Heroes Day" speech delivered on 27 November.

The Tamil Tigers commemorate every year the week during which November 27 falls (incidentally the day after Pirapakaran's birthday which is the 26th of November). Beginning with his much anticipated speech in which the LTTE leader, while recalling their successes on the battlefield, spells out the organisation's political position and concerning issues related to war and peace, within North-East Sri Lanka and many countries in which the LTTE has a support base among expatriate Tamils, the week is marked by commemorative events dedicated to the LTTE's fighters who had laid down their lives for the cause of creating a motherland of Tamil Eelam.

The Tiger leader declared that the LTTE is sincerely committed to a negotiated political settlement. Yet he insisted that lifting of the ban on his organisation is a necessary pre-requisite for the LTTE to participate in the peace talks as the legitimate, authentic representatives of the Tamil people.

In a special appeal made to the majority Sinhala people faced with crucial parliamentary election on 5 December in Sri Lanka, Mr. Pirapaharan urged them to reject racist forces committed

to militarism and war and to offer justice to the Tamil people to bring about peace, ethnic reconciliation and economic prosperity to the island.

The LTTE leader said that the Sinhalese, Tamils and other communities in the island could co-exist in peace and harmony if a political settlement is reached through peaceful means. But he warned that the Tamils would be left with no alternative other than to secede and form an independent state if the Sinhala nation continued to refuse to resolve the conflict through peaceful means. "If racism continues to predominate as the determining force in Sri Lanka's politics, it would certainly create the objective conditions for the emergence of an independent Tamil state," Mr Pirapaharan said.

Expressing regret and dismay over the decision made by some Western governments to include the LTTE in the list of international terrorist organisations, Mr Pirapaharan asserted that the LTTE is a freedom movement fighting for the emancipation of his oppressed people. Branding the LTTE as a terrorist organisation will have a negative effect on the peace process since it would encourage Sri Lanka to adopt a hard-line militarist approach, Mr Pirapaharan said. The Tiger leader also called for a clear and comprehensive definition of the concept of terrorism that would distinguish between armed liberation struggles based on the right to self-determination and blind terrorist acts based on hatred and fanaticism.

The following are extracts from Mr Pirapaharan's statement:

"The Tamil national question, which has assumed the character of a civil war, is essentially a political issue. We still hold a firm belief that this issue can be resolved by peaceful means. If there is genuine will and determination on the part of the Sinhalese leadership there is a possibility for peace and settlement. Though fifty-three years have passed since the independence of this island, the Sinhalese political leadership is still buried in the swamp of racist ideology. That is why they have not developed the wis-

dom and understanding to deal with the Tamil question objectively and realistically. The belief that the Tamil ethnic conflict could be resolved by repressive military means still predominates the Sinhala political system. It is precisely for this reason that none of the major Sinhala political parties have any concrete projects or frameworks for the permanent resolution of the conflict. The international community is fully aware of this fact. These world governments, while insisting that the ethnic conflict should be resolved by peaceful means, have always supported Sri Lanka's political and military efforts to weaken the political struggle of the Tamils. This strange, ambiguous attitude of the world governments has also contributed to the prolongation of the conflict.

We are constantly knocking on the doors of peace but the Kumaratunga government has refused to open the doors. Following the meeting with the Norwegian peace envoys in Vanni in November last year, we declared a unilateral cease-fire for four months to help to facilitate the peace process. The Sri Lanka government responded by ridiculing and rejecting our peace initiative and launched provocative military assaults on our positions. Finally, the government undertook a major offensive operation within hours of the termination of our cease-fire. Our fierce counter-attack repulsed the army's operation and made the government realise the fact that the LTTE is strong and invincible.

Though we are strong with considerable manpower and firepower we abstained from launching any major land based offensive operations this year to facilitate the peace process. We co-operated with Norway's peace efforts. It was under these circumstances that Kumaratunga's government downgraded and marginalised the accredited Norwegian peace envoy, Mr Erik Solheim, accusing him of being biased towards the LTTE. We registered a strong protest against this action. Following this incident the Norwegian peace effort reached a stalemate. Chandrika Kumaratunga is responsible for this issue.

A parliamentary general election is taking place in Sri Lanka at this critical historical turning point. Since we advance our political struggle as an extra-parliamentary liberation organisation we do not attach any significance to parliamentary elections. Yet the LTTE has become the central theme in the current election campaign in Tamil Eelam and in the Sinhala south.

Having assumed itself as the most crucial and cardinal issue in Sri Lankan politics, the Tamil national conflict has effectively polarised the political forces towards two contradictory positions: between war and peace. The elections have become a competitive arena between the forces that seek peace and the extremist forces that are opposed to peace. The general public is given the responsibility of choosing as to whether there will be peace in the future or if the war will continue. The Sinhala people should realise that there can be no peace, ethnic harmony and economic prosperity in the island as long as the Tamil people are denied justice and their political aspirations are not fulfilled.

We are not enemies of the Sinhala people, nor is our struggle against them. It is because of the oppressive policy of the racist Sinhala politicians that contradictions arose between the Sinhala and Tamil nations, resulting in a war. We are fighting this war against a state and its armed forces determined to subjugate our people through the force of arms. We are well aware that this war has not only affected the Tamils but also affects the Sinhala people deeply. Thousands of innocent Sinhala youth have perished as a consequence of the repressive policies of the war mongering ruling elites. We are also aware that it is the Sinhala masses who are bearing the economic burden of the war. Therefore, we call upon the Sinhala people to identify and renounce the racist forces committed to militarism and war and to offer justice to the Tamils in order to put an end to this bloody war and to bring about permanent peace.

The Tamil people want to maintain their national identity and to live in their own lands, in their historically given homeland with peace and dignity. They want to determine their own political and economic life; they want to be on their own. These are the basic political aspirations of the Tamil people. It is neither separatism nor terrorism. These demands do not constitute a threat to the Sinhala people. They do not in any way affect or undermine the political liberties or the social, economic and cultural life of the Sinhala people. The Tamil people favour a political solution that would enable them to live in their own lands with the right to rule themselves. This is what the Tamils mean when they emphasise that a political solution should be based on the right to self-determination.

Our organisation is prepared to negotiate with the Sri Lanka government on a political framework that would sat-

isfy the basic political aspirations of the Tamil people. But for us to participate in political negotiations freely as equal partners, as the authentic political force with the status of legitimate representatives of our people, the ban imposed on our movement should be lifted. This is the collective aspiration of the Tamil people.

We want the peace talks to be held in cordial situation of mutual trust and understanding. For a long time we have been emphasising that the peace talks should take place in a conducive atmosphere of peace and normalcy in the absence of war and economic embargoes. We wish to reiterate the same position now.

The use of violence in all modes of struggles to attain specific political goals is defined as terrorism by international governments. This narrow definition has erased the distinctions between genuine struggles for political independence and terrorist violence. This conception of terrorism has posed a challenge to the moral foundation of armed struggles waged by liberation movements for basic political rights and for the right to self-determination. This development is regrettable. As a consequence our liberation organisation is also being discredited in the international arena.

The world governments waging a war against terror should, first of all, explore the root causes of political violence. It is only through a deep insight into the origins of political violence that one can discern the differences between authentic liberation struggles and blind acts of terror.

In our view, there are two dimensions in political violence. Firstly, there is the violence of the oppressor. Secondly, there is the violence of the oppressed. In most cases the oppressor belongs to the ruling elites, yields state authority and command the armed forces. The oppressed are always the ruled, the minority nationalities, the exploited and the poor. The violence of the first category can be designated as state violence. The second category can be termed as the violence against state violence. Since state violence is a form of repressive violence of the oppressor, it is unjust. The reactive violence of the oppressed is just since it is undertaken with the motive of obtaining justice. It is within the context of this distinction that the violent modes of political struggles of the oppressed find legitimacy.

Violent forms of struggles by people seeking political rights emerge only as reactive violence against state terror. This truth can be discerned if one can

objectively analyse the historical origins of the world liberation organisations. The Tamil Eelam liberation struggle has similar historical origins. The state oppression against the Tamil people originated two decades before the birth of the Tamil Tigers. Fuelled by racist passion, the state repression gradually intensified over time and assumed genocidal proportions.

All forms of peaceful non-violent agitations undertaken by the Tamil people against Sinhala state oppression were brutally repressed by state terror. Since the non-violent political struggle became futile and meaningless and at the same time the state oppression intensified in the form of genocide the Tamil people were left with no alternative other than to confront the state violence with violence. In other words, the Tamil people were compelled to take arms to defend themselves against genocidal destruction. It was under these objective historical conditions the Liberation Tigers took birth and advanced the armed struggle against state terror. With the history of a sustained campaign extending to a period of twenty years our armed resistance has evolved and developed as the political mode of struggle of the Tamil people.

We are a national liberation organisation. We are fighting for the emancipation of our people against racist tyranny, against military occupation, against state terror. Our struggle has a concrete, legitimate political objective. Our struggle is based on the right to self-determination, a principal endorsed by the United Nations Charter. We are not terrorists. We are not mentally demented as to commit blind acts of violence impelled by racist and religious fanaticism. We are fighting and sacrificing our lives for the love of a noble cause i.e. human freedom. We are freedom fighters. The Sinhala state terrorists, who have failed in their efforts to crush our freedom movement for the last two decades, branded our liberation struggle as terrorism. Misguided by the false and malicious propaganda of the Sri Lanka state some of the world governments have included our liberation movement in their list of international terrorist organisations. This is regrettable and disappointing. These decisions have a negative impact. They have been made in haste, without deep insight into the historicity and legitimacy of our struggle for self-determination. It sends a wrong message to the Sinhala racist rulers. It will further harden their hard-line, intransigent attitude. It will encourage their policy of military repression. On

the whole, the actions of some of the Western governments will seriously impede a political solution through peaceful means and further complicate the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

All the member countries of the United Nations have joined the alliance in the war against terrorism spearheaded by the Western powers. Some of the repressive states with a notorious history of racist oppression and gross human rights violations have joined this global alliance against terror. In this context we wish to confine our remarks only to the Sri Lanka state. This government, holding one of the highest records of human rights violations amounting to genocide, has now joined the international alliance against terrorism. This is a dangerous trend in the emerging new world order. This new trend is also posing a threat to the legitimate political struggles of the oppressed humanity subjected to state terror. We fully understand the anger, apprehensions, and compulsions of the Western powers engaged in a war against international terrorism. We welcome the counter-terrorist campaign of the international community to identify and punish the real terrorists. In this context it is crucial that the Western democratic nations should provide a clear and comprehensive definition of the concept of terrorism that would distinguish between

freedom struggles based on the right to self-determination and blind terrorist acts based on fanaticism. The international community cannot ignore the phenomenon of state terror practiced internally by some repressive regimes. The world should seek to identify such terrorist states and penalise them.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam is a people's movement. We are inextricably integrated with the people into a unified single force fighting collectively for the liberation of our homeland. In a devious strategy to alienate and marginalise our liberation organisation from our people and to destroy us the government of Chandrika Kumaratunga proscribed us as a 'terrorist' organisation. Following this decision, Chandrika's government, particularly its Foreign Minister Mr Kadirgamar, launched a sustained propaganda campaign in the international arena portraying the LTTE and the Tamil freedom struggle as a diabolical phenomenon of terrorism. As a consequence the United States, Britain and most recently Canada, have included our liberation movement in their lists of terrorist organisations. These countries are fully aware that we are not a terrorist organisation and that we are a freedom movement functioning with the overwhelming support of our people, repre-

sending their political aspirations. Furthermore, these countries have continued to insist that the LTTE and the Sri Lanka government should engage in peace talks to resolve the ethnic conflict. This stand clearly entails the fact that these countries do recognise the Liberation Tigers as the political representatives of the Tamil people. If so, why did the governments brand us as a terrorist organisation? We cannot understand the logic as to how such action could facilitate the peaceful resolution of the ethnic conflict. We hold the position that unless the Sri Lanka government lifts the ban on our organisation and accepts us as the authentic, legitimate representatives of the Tamil people we will not participate in the peace negotiations. We are firmly committed to this position. We have also clearly stated our position to the Norwegian government. There is a possibility of peace in the island of Sri Lanka only when the LTTE is de-proscribed.

Under these circumstances, proscribing the LTTE by Western governments giving into diplomatic pressures from Sri Lanka will not pave the way for the peaceful negotiated settlement of the conflict. Rather, it will further reinforce the collective demand of our people to lift the ban on the LTTE for the resumption of peace talks". □

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UNA and TNA on Peace Talks with LTTE

The newly elected Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe commenced his search for peace on 12 December, the day after his 25-member cabinet was sworn in. He informed the first meeting of the Parliamentary Group of the UNP that he would visit New Delhi on 22 December to meet the Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and other Indian officials.

Preparations for starting peace negotiations with the LTTE would be a central issue in discussions, the PM told the parliamentary group. He said he would also seek the assistance of the USA and European countries in order to end the ongoing war and bring about a durable peace.

The Parliamentary group resolved unanimously to do the needful to start the peace process soon. Foreign Minister Tyronne Fernando would accompany the Prime Minister. "India will play a constructive role in getting the peace talks started," Fernando told reporters later.

The UNF parliamentary group also decided to "enlist the support of relevant local political parties and groups."

The Prime Minister commenced that process on 10 December when he met a delegation of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and later held talks with a Peoples Alliance delegation. The JVP group led by its parliamentary group leader Wimal Weerawansa pledged its support for the resolution of the ethnic conflict but insisted that any solution should be within the framework of a united Sri Lanka and a unitary structure of the state. The PA group led by Opposition leader Ratnasiri Wickremanayake and accompanied by Lakshman Kadirgamar and Mangala Samaraweera pledged its support for the resolution of the ethnic conflict.

Wickremesinghe assured the PA delegation that it would be kept fully briefed about the negotiations. He gave a similar assurance to the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) leader R Sampanthan who urged Wickremesinghe of the need to commence the peace process. He said the people of the North have overwhelmingly endorsed the

TNA manifesto which proclaimed the LTTE as the sole representatives of the Tamil people.

The UNF in its election manifesto pledged to restore peace by starting negotiations with the LTTE. The party pledged to set up an interim administration for the north and east.

Sampanthan further said: "The Tamil National Alliance will not allow the resolution of the Tamil national question to be delayed indefinitely any longer. It must be understood by all concerned that a just and durable solution to the Tamil national question cannot be denied any longer. It must be given the most urgent and serious consideration by the Sinhala political leadership and Sinhala political parties".

"We appeal to the international community to impress upon the Sri Lankan Government and the Sinhala political parties in the opposition that unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka can be preserved only upon the basis of a just and durable solution to the Tamil national question. The consequences of the failure to evolve a just and durable solution to the Tamil national question must be clearly understood by all concerned," Sampanthan said.

"The elections have proved beyond all reasonable doubt that the Tamil people are solidly behind the Liberation Tigers. The results are also an endorsement that the Tamils are a distinct nation and that they have the right to self-determination. The Tamils have endorsed that the Liberation Tigers are their sole representatives, Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham TNA MP for Batticaloa.

The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka (NPC) said, "Through their vote people in the north-east overwhelmingly mandated a negotiation process between the LTTE and the government aimed at ending the war."

LTTE too has endorsed the fact that the election had demonstrated that the majority of the people, Sinhalese and Tamils, want peace. "The Sinhala people have clearly indicated that they want the new government to solve the

Tamil question," S P Thamichelvan, leader of the political wing of the LTTE said, adding "The Tamil and Sinhala people have given the correct verdict at the recent election. They have expressed their support to the request made to them by our leader."

LTTE leader Velupillai Pirabakaran, in his November 27 Hero's Day speech said this election is a contest between the forces that sought peace and those who want the continuance of the war. He appealed to the Sinhala people to decide whether they want war or peace and said his organization is prepared for peace talks if the ban on them was removed.

"If the new government disregards this wish of the people, it will be thrown out," Thamichelvan warned.

Actively promoted and encouraged by the LTTE, four Tamil political parties - TULF, TELO, Tamil Congress and EPRLF (Premachandran faction) forged a united front called Tamil National Alliance to voice Tamil aspirations. They sought endorsement from the Tamil voters of their position that the government should commence negotiations with the LTTE being the sole representative of the Tamil people and ban imposed on it by Sri Lanka must be lifted.

LTTE leader Pirapakaran voiced this position in his Hero's Day Speech: We are freedom fighters. We took up arms to resist state terror, which was unleashed to suppress our legitimate opposition to discrimination. We are not mentally demented people who fight for the sake of fighting. We are not terrorists.

TNA has given political legitimacy to LTTE's war. TNA is telling the international community that LTTE is our sole representatives. To solve our problem speak to them. Tamil people have demonstrated by electing 15 TNA representatives that LTTE represents them.

The TNA polled 3.89 percent of the total valid votes polled in Sri Lanka at the elections. It got 348,164 votes in the electoral districts of Jaffna, Vanni, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Ampara - the entire North-East - and Colombo. The TNA got 12,696 votes in the Colombo electoral district.

Only four other Tamil IMPs were elected in the North-East, two of the EPDP and one each from UNP and PLOT, T. Makeswaran and D. Sitharthan respectively both of whom had

(continued on next page)

Defeating Pessimism about Peace Prospects

Dr. Jehan Perera

The mandate of the people at the general election was for economic progress and peace which were the two foremost promises of the UNP in its election campaign. The election of a new government has also presented an opportunity to put the past behind and to face the future with a forthright conflict resolution perspective. The electorate's rejection of the ultra-nationalist propaganda of the PA, and the fear psychosis it was meant to create, is a major encouragement for peace forces in the country.

But optimism needs to be checked by realism. The big yellow banners that marked an election monitoring vehicle enabled it to travel through the curfew in Trincomalee district, though the banners were not really necessary for security. Trincomalee was one of the less troubled districts where free and fair elections were concerned. Unlike in Vavuniya and Batticaloa, voters from the LTTE-controlled areas were permitted into the government-controlled areas to cast their votes, which they did peaceably. However, people in the district live in continuous tension.

The fear they live in was evident when the yellow bannered vehicle stopped by a village. The group of small children who were playing by the roadside looked at it apprehensively and then retreated. Their reaction was not a typical one for Sri Lanka. The natural tendency for children elsewhere is to be curious about outsiders. The policeman who was being dropped off at his home

had asked for a ride at the checkpoint. Due to the post-election curfew, there were hardly any vehicles on the road. During the ride he was helpful in explaining the voting pattern of the people in Hataraskotuwa, which comes after Habarana on the road to Trincomalee. The people had voted for the UNP, he said, despite their belief that the UNP had a secret agreement with the LTTE.

The strident barrage of PA propaganda carried by the state media had made its mark on the people. But they had still voted for the UNP, though perhaps in lesser numbers than they might otherwise have done. The LTTE is a much feared predator in the border villages of Trincomalee. It has a reputation there of an organisation that kills people with no compunction. Wealthier people of the area, especially traders, are kidnapped for ransom and killed if the money is not forthcoming. No one in the area would wish the LTTE to take control, as the PA propaganda warned. Therefore, those who voted for the UNP did so despite their concern over the alleged secret agreement with the LTTE.

Primarily, they wanted to get rid of the PA government, which had failed to solve their problems, neither providing them with economic benefits nor ending the war. Secondly, they were hopeful that the UNP would not implement its secret agreement with the LTTE. This was because they had confidence that the other parties in Parliament would not permit the UNP to act in such a manner. In short, the people were not optimistic

about the prospects for peace with the LTTE.

They had voted for the UNP to obtain economic benefits. As for peace talks with the LTTE, they believed that the LTTE would make unreasonable demands that could not be met.

Parallel Pessimism

Forty kilometers away in Trincomalee town the reasoning was different, but the sense of pessimism was the same. In 1994, the people had seen the PA come to power on a popular mandate similar to that of the UNP's present mandate. As on this occasion, the PA had faced a barrage of propaganda that they too had a secret agreement with the LTTE. Just like the present UNP government, the former PA government had withstood this propaganda and had prevailed at the elections. The Tamil people had voted for the PA in large numbers in 1994. Despite this, the government had gone back to war.

The people were not optimistic that the new UNP government would be any better in the long run. Due to the obstacles presented by the opposition and other forces, no government would do justice by the Tamils, they felt. In its election campaign the UNP promised to lift the economic embargo on LTTE-controlled areas, to bring about a ceasefire and to recommence the peace process. It is important that the new government moves swiftly to implement its promises. This would serve to increase the confidence of the Tamil people in the new government.

The people can only become a pressure group on behalf of the peace process if they have confidence in it. On the other hand, if they are pessimistic about it, they will not be a pressure group on those who might have a vested interest in continuing with the war. Likewise it is also important that the LTTE make some goodwill gesture to the new government. During the period of the election campaign they desisted from any major military action. They could now pledge to desist from any action that targets civilians.

This would include the kidnapping and extortion of money from the civilian population. For a sustainable peace process, it is essential that the confidence building process should include the civilian population, and not be limited to the conflicting parties. In complex internal conflicts, such as Sri Lanka's, where the ethnic conflict involves many actors and not simply the government and LTTE, peace efforts are required at

(Continued from page 16)

accepted that the Government should talk to the LTTE about the solution to the Tamil problem. The EPDP too has joined the bandwagon by pledging full support to Government's effort to solve the ethnic problem by talking to the LTTE. Now, every elected Tamil representative, including those from the Central Hills want the Government to talk to the LTTE. That appears to be the Tamil consensus.

Sampanthan says: "We expect the Sinhala political parties to negotiate only with the Liberation Tigers of

Tamil Eelam on the basis of a Sinhala consensus with third party international mediation. There can be no resolution to the Tamil national question without a Sinhala consensus."

"Both major political parties should come with a solution to the Tamil national question instead of saying that they are prepared for talks with all concerned. We shall make every effort both in and out parliament to actively pursue the goals that we have defined in the Tamil National Alliance manifesto," he added. □

many levels. If peacemaking is to take place it has to take place with the consent of the people. For instance, political leaders cannot implement a peace agreement that is not supported by the general population or influential groups in civil society.

Sometimes they cannot even begin to negotiate a peace agreement unless there is popular support for it and a build-up of popular expectations concerning the need for them.

Key Compromises

The past experience of government negotiations with the LTTE has been one of disengagement once discussions reach substantive issues. This is on account of the wide gap between LTTE demands and what the Sri Lankan government has on offer. The success of the peace talks would also depend on civic pressure that would keep the government and LTTE at the negotiating table, and induce them towards compromise.

Key to a new political culture and to the restoration of ethnic harmony in the country is a government firmly constituted on principles which would permit genuine power-sharing between the ethnic communities. It also calls for an accommodation between the two major political parties with the checks and balances of shared power between the PA and UNP.

In a multi-ethnic and regionally diverse country in which there is a strong two-party system and a division of power between the presidency and parliament there cannot be a total 100 per cent wielding of power by any one side over any part of the country. In this scenario before negotiations can commence with the LTTE, the President and Parliament will have to resolve their own differences. If President Chandrika Kumaratunga with her charisma and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe with his management skills can combine forces Sri Lanka can be on the road to recovery very soon.

But so far the indications are those of a confrontation between the President and the new Parliamentary majority. The President is speaking in partisan tones of "my party people" being victimised after the elections rather than as the President of all Sri Lankans. There are hardliners in the UNP who speak of impeaching the President unless she gives way to them. Prime Minister Wickremesinghe's letter to President Kumaratunga prior to election day could be the guiding star of the new government. In this letter the UNP leader pledged to lis-

A Platform for Consensual Politics

Lakshman Gunasekara

In 1977, I remember (as a young Trotskyist activist who campaigned hard against the UNP) a feeling of immense foreboding of a dark future when the UNP won that election. It was an election result that has had huge repercussions on the lives of all Sri Lankans those living at that time and of several subsequent generations. In the following years of UNP rule my worst fears were confirmed. And half way through that 17-year regime (in the early eighties) I remember telling a friend that I instinctively felt that a bloodbath was coming, and didn't it?

I remember, in my campaigning together with my fellow activists in 1977, predicting to anyone who listened to us, that the very opposite to what the UNP had promised then would happen: that prices of essentials would increase, workers' and peasants' rights would be diluted, that the economic trajectory would be reversed, that rather than a 'dharma-shta' society we would become an adharma-shta one.

Our predictions were based on our careful assessment of not just the UNP's past practice, its policies and social class

orientation but also, the calibre of its leadership. It was also based on the balance of power among social classes in accordance with the political system of the time. All of that we predicted happened and worse. The scrapping of an import substitution economy and the introduction of an export-based one saw the reversal of our external trade balance. The currency was deliberately devalued. Poverty flourished and malnutrition appeared. Thuggery became the norm and, finally, authoritarian rule became constitutionalised.

But things became far worse

I knew that the UNP would renege on its promise to summon an all-party conference within a year of coming to power in order to deal with the ethnic problem (there was no war as such at the time). But I never dreamt that not only would the UNP leadership prevaricate over the ethnic issue (and perhaps toy with it) but that they would actually actively fan the flames of communal hatred and help launch massive racial pogroms! And so we are in the horrendous mess that we are in now.

Evaluating the Past

Today, there are whole generations of young Sri Lankan voters who never knew (in an understanding fashion) that era and who have, quite reasonably, voted out of power a PA government which they felt was arrogant, insensitive to many problems of the people, and was becoming authoritarian. Dare I make any predictions of what these young people might get with the arrival only partial in power of the UNP? I say 'partial' because the political system is such that a parliamentary victory no longer means the assumption of complete governmental power.

When I assess the prospects today of the return to power of the UNP, I must again evaluate the past practice of the UNP, its policies, the calibre of its leadership and the social balance of power as it is configured by the current political system.

The UNP's past practice in its role as the parliamentary Opposition has been reminiscent of its duplicity of the 1970s

ten to the voice of the people telling a UNP government to work with a PA president, to put the country before politics and to end confrontational politics and create an environment for national reconciliation. Immediately on being sworn the new Prime Minister pledged to work within the constitution, to uphold the rule of law for all, to share power with other like-minded political parties and to strive for reconciliation. The PA led by President Kumaratunga need to recognise where they failed, and the changed circumstances they face.

In particular, President Kumaratunga needs to overcome her fierce partisanship and confrontational inclinations. With her commitment to the devolution of power, which is an essential condition for the resolution of the ethnic conflict, she can be a partner of the new government in defeating the pessimism regarding working out a durable solution to the ethnic conflict in which the credit and responsibility will be shared. □

and 1980s. They promise one thing and do the opposite. They even sign a written agreement on inter-party collaboration for peace (courtesy of Liam Fox) but fail to observe the spirit of the agreement. The UNP went as far as collaborating with the draft constitution, but reneged on parliamentary support at the last minute. In the early years in the Opposition, post-1994, the UNP seemed to join the rest of the country in rejecting the executive presidency. Today, its leadership is sending mixed signals on this issue.

This duplicity would be quite alarming if not for the fact that the calibre of the leadership and its general configuration is quite different from that of the JR-Premadasa era.

True, our new Prime Minister-elect, Ranil Wickremesinghe did hold office during that dark era. True, certain others who held even higher office and performed the darkest deeds in the shadows yet hover in the background in Sirikotha. True, yet others some who now openly advocate 'dictatorship' have also entered the party.

Learning Lessons from the Past

But it is just possible that Ranil himself has learnt some bitter lessons. And it is quite certain that there are today, in the upper rungs of the UNP, many younger generation leaders who have been openly critical of past practice and, who advocate fundamental changes in the political system created by the UNP that would prevent the recurrence of such practices.

Furthermore, the UNP leadership is not as cohesive as it was after J.R. Jayawardene imposed his iron control over the party. Nor is it as monolithic in personality power as the People's Alliance which, to some degree, suffers from the sheer omniscience of Chandrika Kumaratunga's intellect and the lack of anyone even approaching her calibre. In the UNP today, there are several groups with different ideas and there is the possibility that a delicate balance of power will ensure a more reasonable approach to things than the reckless autocracy of the past.

Since the people at leadership level are somewhat different there is hope that, now that the immediate thirst for power is sated, there will be less such recklessness.

It remains to be seen whether Ranil Wickremesinghe can resist the pressures of those who are prepared to risk country and society in (1) seeking political revenge (2) indulging the old practice of pillage on a grand scale and (3) engaging in more political manipulations to

grab even more power in order to further the first and second objectives.

If the state of the UNP's current leadership makes one less fearful of prospects than in 1977, the current political system and current balance of power is also somewhat reassuring.

If the UNP in 1977 had the advantage of absolute parliamentary power as well as executive power, today the UNP does not. The very political system it authored as well as the changes in political culture generated by the PA's regime has ensured this.

Our version of the proportional representation system has ensured that the UNP does not have an absolute parliamentary majority (let alone the five sixths it enjoyed in 1977). More significantly, Ranil and his colleagues are dependent on the support of other, smaller parties that are sharply critical of the UNP's past performance and are not likely to tolerate much deviation from electoral promises.

Furthermore, the constitution this party founded provides a State structure that is a happy restraint on any wayward tendencies the party might harbour. A win in parliamentary elections no longer means absolute governmental power.

Even if the UNP had obtained a large parliamentary majority (which it has not), it cannot be the same powerful government as it was under the Westminster-type system in 1977. Rather, government must be shared with the President who is of the PA which is now humbly in Opposition.

Of course, if the UNP leadership succumbs to the pressures of the more reckless elements in the party, there could be a confrontation which will only worsen the political crisis a worsening which, the LTTE, waiting in the wings, will probably exploit to enhance its own legitimacy as well as its politico-military power.

Two to Tango

But it takes two to tango. The UNP may not be enticed into manoeuvres for further power-grabbing if the path of governance is not unduly impeded by the out-going PA.

The PA must learn its lesson. The very political culture it has (thankfully) helped usher in since 1994, has shown, in the electoral outcome, that it will not easily tolerate the kind of depredations that UNP lavishly indulged in earlier and the PA, somewhat feebly, resorted to in its tenure. The PA must learn that creativity and not a mere fall back on old-style politics is essential for political success.

In short, both major political formations face new tests in the post-election scenario.

But most important is the new and unprecedented opportunity opened up for a joint political effort for political reform and peace. And this is something which the majority of Sri Lankans now earnestly desire. A recent opinion survey carried out by INPACT shows clearly that more than sixty per cent of Sri Lankans want political parties, especially the major national formations to actively collaborate for peace and reform. A significant percentage of Sri Lankans even advocate a joining government. This may be exactly what we now have.

The Western-style competitive system of democracy this country has been saddled with by our colonial masters has never encouraged Government and Opposition to genuinely collaborate to resolve the fundamental social, economic and political problems this society faces after half a millennium of colonial domination and triage. In fact the intensity of the post-colonial social tensions has been such that even genuine attempts at unequivocal collaboration - the best example being Vijaya and Chandrika Kumaratunga's spontaneous support for the UNP's provincial council system could not be sustained. In the case of the Vijaya-Chandrika initiative in 1987, which actually transcended that dynamic of perennial hostility, it was the UNP government's bloody battle with the JVP that destroyed any hope of further collaboration. In any case it would not have been enough merely for Vijaya and Chandrika to break ranks with the rest of the Opposition. The bulk of the Opposition must perform correctly.

The post-1994 experience of inter-party 'collaboration' has also indicated this fatal flaw in liberal parliamentary democracy. Even though the PA government refrained (not entirely for altruistic reasons) from seriously investigating the atrocities and abuses of power of the past UNP regime, even if the PA Government's political harassment of the UNP in Opposition never compared with the bloody repression of the Opposition by the past UNP government, the UNP remained naturally reluctant to go the full distance in collaborating with the PA in the reform and peace initiative.

This is because, in the competitive political system, the party in power will always win far more credit from the success of such an initiative than the party in opposition. This is primarily because, by the very fact that it is in power, the ruling party in this case the PA would be

(continued on page 21)

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(Continued from page 19)

seen as bearing the responsibility of executive implementation of the reforms and any peace agreement, as well as taking the greater political risk.

The failure of a Government-Opposition political collaboration to overcome the ethnic problem has plagued this country since freedom from colonial rule in 1948 - in effect since the Western-style system of 'democracy' was put in place.

Today, however, there is a twist to this tragic tale of governance. The current, extremely flawed, political system with which we are saddled, has enabled an unique combination of power. The previous binary opposition has now been contained in a singularity (if unstable).

Both major political formations, whose collaboration is crucial for reform and peace, are now in power together. For the first time in our history as a post-colonial State, the major political forces are not structurally differentiated in Government and Opposition. Rather, they are both in power and must structurally - under the current constitution play a joint role in governance.

If only all other sides to this equation are reconcilable, then, we do have a golden opportunity for reform and peace in our time.

Unique Attributes

This historic conjunction of party political power has other unique and valuable attributes. We have an executive head of State who has the best record of commitment to ethnic equality and peace. It is the performance in government of her party, the PA, which won for Sri Lanka the international political credibility that has, at last, enabled the politico-military equation vis-à-vis the LTTE to reach some equilibrium in which both the Sri Lankan State as well as the dominant Eelamist separatist leadership are under equal pressure to deal for peace.

Alongside her, we have now in government the other major political party which, has also firmly established its credentials as an advocate of ethnic equality and shared sovereignty as the way to peace. If Chandrika's PA took the giant step forward towards maximum federal devolution, in Ranil's UNP we have a force that has publicly indicated a readiness to go further asymmetrical devolution or confederalism.

In support of both these major political formations, now combined in Government, we have smaller parties that represent substantially the ethnic minorities, including the Tamil movement for self-determination. Their political support in and out of parliament will nurture what-

Peace Hopes Rise Again as in 1994

Dr. S. Narapalasingam

In 1994, the People's Alliance led by Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga was elected to govern the country on her assurance that she would negotiate with the LTTE and end the war and restore peace. This was the first time a party had declared publicly on an election platform that the Tamil people had genuine grievances and these must be addressed satisfactorily by initiating talks with the LTTE. It received the mandate of the people for a peaceful settlement of the ethnic conflict on this basis. In the same elections the Sinhala people rejected the ultra nation-

ever collaboration that develops between the PA President and UNP Cabinet. Here then, we have tremendous potential for the widest possible political consensus - the kind of consensus that has, for long, evaded this country.

But concrete political action must be taken to provide the foundations for a genuine inter-party collaboration in Government. The Presidency must be ready to draw into the fold of its vast executive powers, an UNP Cabinet of ministers who must take on substantial executive responsibility. On the other hand, the UNP leadership will have to restrain those elements within the UNP that may seek to go beyond the mandate of the parliamentary election for further, perhaps exclusive, State power.

If President Kumaratunga and her political colleagues have courageously pushed the country forward in the direction towards fundamental political change, Premier-elect Ranil Wickremesinghe and many of his close colleagues have done much to make the grand scheme of shared sovereignty among communities an acceptable idea to the majority of Sri Lankans. And now, given this unique conjunction of power, there is an opportunity for all to equally obtain political credit in making things happen.

Will things happen? I am uncertain. But I do not have the forebodings of 1977. Perhaps I am "hoping against hope" as we Sri Lankans love to say. □

alists, who stood for retaining the dominant position of the Sinhalese throughout the country. The voters did not accept the view that this was necessary for safeguarding the interests and future of the Sinhala-Buddhists.

The elation especially among those people afflicted severely by the war was clearly visible. They thought their miseries would end soon and better times were ahead. The euphoria among the people of all ethnic communities ended soon when the peace talks collapsed prematurely and the war resumed with greater intensity. Different reasons have been given by the warring parties and independent observers for the failure and the tragedy that struck again the country and the peace-loving people. But the fact is that costly mistakes have been made in 1995, which must not be repeated if the people are to realise this time their hopes for lasting peace.

The United National Front contested the December 5 elections with peace as one of its main objectives. The other being the improvement of economic performance, which had for various reasons been poor in the past few years. Negative growth is expected for the current year. Public opinion polls indicated that peace was uppermost in the minds of the vast majority of the people, though the high cost of living was also an irritant. They seemed to have recognised the link between the war that was consuming considerable resources at the expense of their well-being and law and order in the country. Violence and corruption were becoming endemic threatening to destroy the traditional values of the peaceful society.

The people this time have given the mandate to the UNP-led national front to end the conflict peacefully as stated in its election manifesto. The victory of the UNF is significant since the then ruling party and the JVP warned strongly of a UNP-LTTE nexus. UNP

was accused of supporting the demand for the secession of the north-east region. It was alleged to have entered into an agreement with the separatists. The fact that the people did not take this warning seriously is clear from the outcome of the elections. Had the elections been conducted under the first-past-the-post system, the endorsement for a fresh peace initiative would be more striking than seen from the 109 seats won by the UNF. It would have obtained more than two-thirds of the total seats, which was also the case in 1994 when the PA won with a slender majority of only one seat under the present system of proportional representation.

Other aspects that make the December 5 election results striking and crucial for peace making are: (1) Unlike in 1994, this election was marred by violence, misuse of state resources, intimidation and vote rigging; (2) The next Presidential election is not due for another four years; (3) Four Tamil parties contested the election jointly as Tamils National Alliance on a pro-LTTE platform and secured 15 seats; (4) The Sinhala Urumaya and other Sinhala ultra nationalist parties failed to win any seats; (5) The PA government lost the election despite having a Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist Prime Minister who wanted a government without the support of the minor parties; and (5) The JVP won 16 seats, 6 more than it occupied in the last Parliament but this is unlikely for its opposing stand on the approach proposed by the two main parties for resolving the ethnic conflict.

It seems that mainly the Sinhala youth dissatisfied with the ways the two parties had governed and which failed to tackle earnestly the problems of unemployment, low incomes and poverty

among their community, while providing opportunities for those wielding power and the rich to get richer had voted for the JVP. The party would have won more seats if not for the attention drawn during the final stage in their campaign to the crimes committed against the people in the south at the time of their second (1987-1990) insurgency.

The weekly journal *ECONOMIST* (December 8, 2001) commenting on the outcome of the December 5 elections has stated that the "new government may try harder to talk to the Tigers." As for the Tigers, it says that "the election has given the Tigers a new sort of clout in Colombo. Four Tamil parties all of them past victims of the Tigers' policy of assassinating moderates, joined forces to form the Tamil National Alliance, which trounced the Tamil party backing Mrs Kumaratunga in the north and east. They agree that the Tigers should represent Tamils in negotiations with the government. For the first time, the Tigers have something akin to a political wing with seats in parliament." If the TNA could play the dual role of an intermediary between the government and the LTTE as well as peace makers, then they will be able to help in creating a conducive climate for reconciliation and eventual settlement of the conflict.

Generally, not only the stock market and the tourist industry have welcomed the election results but also foreign governments which have been providing financial aid to Sri Lanka. Concerned about the costly war that has been depriving Sri Lanka of the resources needed for sustained growth and development, they have been wishing for an early negotiated settlement of the conflict.

Given the JVP's highly biased stand on the ethnic issue and ultra-left policies on the development of the economy and the distribution of the benefits, it cannot be expected to support the new government's moves to solve the ethnic and economic problems. Unlike the PA in 1994, the UNP has stated that it would not in a hurry try to introduce constitutional reforms aimed at a final settlement of the protracted conflict. Instead, "the UNP will initiate a dialogue with all political parties, the clergy and civil society organisations to arrive at a broad-based political solution acceptable to all. The party will also get the LTTE involved in the process." (Political party manifesto highlights - The Sunday Times of November 18, 2001). The UNP has stated categorically that not until a political solution accepted by the majority of all the communities, it will not introduce constitutional reforms for the final resolution of the conflict.

This can be viewed in more than one way. It can be interpreted as the party's sincere commitment to democracy where the views of all the parties are considered and decision made on the basis of the opinion of the majority. This implies that the accommodation of the views of the minority groups depends on the goodwill and tolerance of the majority towards the former. A similar approach through an all party conference made by the UNP during J.R.Jayewardene's leadership failed to arrive at a "broad-based political solution".

The very pertinent question here is what happens if a consensus cannot be reached within a reasonable period? Will any interim arrangement as proposed by the UNP be acceptable to the LTTE and indeed to other parties in the south? Can an acceptable arrangement be found within the existing constitutional provisions? The thirteenth amendment resulting from the 1987 Indo-Lanka Pact was rejected by the LTTE. This led to the war between the LTTE and the Indian army who came initially as a peace-keeping force. It is too early to attempt to find answers to these important questions.

Alternatively, it can be a means to avoid a final settlement through the reform of the unitary constitution (which the UNP had pledged to uphold) and

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hope that peace will return eventually with the granting of the immediate demands of the TNA endorsed also by the LTTE. These are: (1) The immediate lifting of the economic embargo in parts of the north-east under LTTE's control; (2) The withdrawal of the residential and travel restrictions; (3) The cessation of the war; (4) The commencement of the process of negotiations with the LTTE with international third party involvement; and (5) The de-proscription of the LTTE by the new government.

This will appease the LTTE, if the organisation has been hoping for some extra-constitutional political arrangement that permits the organisation to administer the affairs in the north-east region. A similar offer made by President Chandrika Kumaratunga as reported in the TIME magazine of February 9, 1998 had not stopped the war. In exchange for stopping the fighting, she had offered the Tigers the right to run the northern province without having to face elections for up to ten years. But the LTTE leader did not respond to her offer.

Any meaningful interim arrangement without some prior understanding of the basics for a final settlement is not as simple as made to appear because of the legal issues involved, particularly if the new government wants to be seen as respecting the country's constitution. It will also have to convince the powerful Buddhist leaders that any such arrangement is not permanent but made only for the near short-term. The rationale for accepting the immediate demands of the TNA/LTTE could be that the ensuing peace would with time become permanent without major changes to the constitution.

In fact, the UNP might be thinking along this line hoping that the demand for a separate autonomous state in the north-east would dissipate if the Tamil people are convinced that they could enjoy the same rights and privileges as the majority Sinhalese under the existing unitary system. However, the plausibility of this scenario hinges on one crucial factor. The LTTE must be willing to give up its cherished goal of Tamil Eelam in which case it might allow the government to win the hearts and minds of the Tamil people through various conciliatory moves. If the past

JVP: Projecting a New Image

Colombo Correspondent

Some political analysts that the say JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) has come of age while others seem to think that it has won acceptance among the people. Both groups cite the meetings its delegation had with President Chandrika Kumaratunga on December 9 and new Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe the following day,

is any indication of the likely future attitude of the LTTE, this seems unlikely. But the situation now after several countries have banned the LTTE as a "terrorist" organisation is different.

This way of achieving peace, depends on the determination of the new government to rebuild the shattered trust between the different communities a process that will need considerable efforts to face many challenges. The obstacles will come from sections on either side of the ethnic divide who are keen to show their nationalist feelings and stick to their racial prejudice.

In the past, many leaders had used their powers and skills to mislead the people. Religious leaders in many countries afflicted by internal conflicts had been in the forefront trying to bring about reconciliation and peace but unfortunately this is not the case in Sri Lanka. There are many challenges that lie ahead for achieving lasting peace in Sri Lanka and the new government should not make the same mistakes in the belief that there are either simplistic or devious ways to achieve peace. Importantly, the fact that the willingness and the efforts of all parties to the conflict are essential for making peace must not be overlooked. The results of the recent elections have shown the readiness of the people to accept sensible moves to end the war and restore peace and it is up to the leaders on both sides of the ethnic divide to seize this opportunity to work together for fulfilling their common hope. □

both at their request.

At both meetings the JVP leadership appeared to play a constructive, "people friendly" role, an effort at projecting a new image the new generation of JVP leaders assiduously undertake. Apparently in the interest of the country the JVP delegation beseeched President Kumaratunga and former Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake who was also present, constructive cohabitation with the new Prime Minister.

"Confrontation between the executive and legislative arms of the state would imperil the interests of the nation," JVP's parliamentary leader Wimal Weerawansa who led the 3-member delegation is reported to have told the President.

He also appealed to the President to summon Parliament early to enable the government to pass a Vote on Account, a measure needed to ensure the smooth functioning of the new Government. The President responded positively by promptly summoning Parliament to meet on December 17, which she rescheduled for the next day when notified that it coincided with the Muslim Festival Ramadan. President Kumaratunga acknowledged JVP's "goodwill-building exercise" by announcing that the summoning of Parliament earlier than previously indicated was done at the JVP's request.

With Wickremesinghe the JVP leadership pleaded, again in the national interest, to co-operate with his arch rival President Kumaratunga. It also pledged to act constructively in parliament and help in the solution of the country's urgent problems: activating the peace process, reviving the economy and managing the mounting unemployment. Weerawansa assured support for a solution to the ethnic problem provided it is within the unitary structure of the state. He requested the Prime Minister to take steps to end post-election

tion violence. Wickremesinghe was pleased with the meeting and told so to the media.

The coming of age of the JVP, which won 16 seats, was aimed at erasing its violent past, the failed 1971 insurrection which disrupted life in Southern Sri Lanka and left thousands killed and the 1988-89 terror period which President Premadasa put down with state terror.

"We've almost succeeded in rubbing away that terror image," said JVP leader Tilvin Silva. "People now look at us as a responsible set of youngsters. We want to build on that image."

The terror image was temporarily rekindled with the marathon 3-hour speech of Somawansa Amarasinghe, the only surviving member of the old JVP leadership and who had been in self-imposed exile in France returned to the island just few days before the election in an attempt to bolster JVP's campaign. His speech, in which he justified the taking of arms by the JVP and his denial that JVP attacked the Dalada Maligawa spewed violent controversy and compelled the JVP to call a special press conference to reassert that the party had abandoned violence for ever. Rather than helping the JVP, Amarasinghe's arrival and his marathon speech and the resulting controversy brought to the surface the past violent image and made it to lose votes. His arrival had also helped the UNP to unleash a violent anti-JVP campaign.

The picture of responsibility got tagged to the JVP following the short-lived Memorandum of Understanding it signed with Peoples Alliance (PA) in October. It incorporated a strict time frame and got President Chandrika Government to implement some of the promises, the most important being the enactment of the 17th Amendment, which set up the five independent commissions including the Elections Commission.

"It's unfortunate that Parliament was dissolved before the independent

commissions were activated. Our present task is to get them to function," Tilvin Silva said.

He was asked whether it was possible to do that since they have lost the remote control. "Yes" was his reply. "Our 16 MPs matter when the Government needs two-thirds majority. We will use that situation."

Weerawansa has told the new Prime Minister that they would support a solution to the ethnic problem if it does not violate national integrity and retains the unitary status. JVP has slowly veered away from the chauvinistic stand it took earlier this year regarding peace talks. It first said it is an internal problem and opposed Norwegian mediation. Later it said the LTTE should drop its Eelam demand and agree to lay down arms. Now that the LTTE had opted to work out a solution within united Sri Lanka it does not talk of those issues any more.

JVP which improved its parliamentary representation from one seat in 1994 to 10 in 2000 and to 16 on December 5 has begun to adopt a long-term view of its "democratic revolution". It had attracted 296,579 more votes in the course of a year. It polled 518,774 votes countrywide in last year's elections. It got 815,353 this time. Its strength in Parliament has climbed from one to 16 MPs in seven years. In October last year it polled 5.99 percent of the total valid votes polled. This rode to 9.10 now, a significant 60 percent rise.

The JVP has achieved this by shrewdly exploiting the PA's political crises. Its upswing is mostly at the expense of the PA. Both the JVP and the PA appealed largely to Sinhala Buddhists during the elections by persistently attempting to stoke up nationalist sentiments among them. This enabled the JVP to attract a portion of the Sinhala Buddhist votes that shifted away from PA. In the Gampaha district, the home of the Bandaranaiques, where there was a considerable shift away from the PA,

the JVP collected a considerable portion.

In the Gampaha electorate the JVP which polled 9.7 percent last year it collected 14.2 percent this year. Similarly in Dompe and Mahara JVP made significant gains. Kalutara district is another good example. PA lost nearly 40,000 votes of which UNP gained 10,000, the balance going to the JVP.

The JVP has also widened its vote base. Last year it won seats in eight of the country's 22 electoral districts. This year it had added three more - Anuradhapura, Ratnapura and Kandy.

"It is the PA votes that are coming to us. But you can't say this trend will continue," says Weerawansa.

If it wants to further widen its vote base, the JVP has to widen the territorial reach. It must go to the Central Hills. It must extend itself to the north and east where it collected a few hundreds of votes this time. To achieve that Tilvin Silva who called his party's growth last year a marvel says the party must build up its national image. It started that work this year by nominating a Tamil, Ramalingam Chandrasekar as one of its three national list MPs. Last year it nominated a Muslim lady, Anjan Umma, who won for the JVP this year a seat in Gampaha.

The lesson the JVP learnt from December 5 election, its strategists point out, is the rejection of communal parties by the Sinhala people. The JVP needs a fresh image, the image of a party that could wean away the minority communities from Tamil and Muslim extremists. JVP wants to build itself that image.

Sihala Urumaya, which projects itself as the protector of the Sinhala people lost its sole representation it had in the last parliament. Its leader Tilak Karunaratne says the JVP had robbed its votes.

JVP had also relegated the old left and the new left to the background. The old left - the Lanka Sama Samaja Party

(continued on next page)



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The Right to Franchise: Eschewing the Cult of Personality

Kishali Pinto Jayawardene

There are those of us - even in the highest places and occupying the highest offices in this land - who scoff at the right to franchise. For these personalities, an almost total lack of any ethical sense of what is right and wrong is masked by a thin veneer of what has been referred to as 'charismatic appeal', a highly deceptive cult of personality which, unfortunately for this country, numbers not only politicians in its ranks.

The right to franchise and its accompanying guarantees of accountability on the part of our leaders and public officials are therefore to be contemptuously shoved aside and replaced with buffoonery or savagery, as that particular occasion demands.

This has been the tragedy of Sri Lanka in recent times. That accountability, in its manifest forms could have been co-opted by such individuals with nary a whimper by those who should have - and could have - protested. That we failed to see the dangers inherent in this cult of personality and indeed, focus on the many times where the cult has split and shown expedient arrogance beneath. That we failed to look beyond the personal to the system and ultimately to the country and recognise the quick destruction of even the remnants of what once made us proud to call ourselves Sri Lankans.

It is in this sense that Wednesday's

elections is truly significant. Despite the absence of a culture of protest in this country, the 2001 General Elections demonstrated how a people can translate their protest to the vote amidst unprecedented violence and intimidation. In the manner of their doing, Wednesday's polls teaches many things, not only to our erstwhile rulers who failed us so profoundly but to all those who believed that the right to franchise of the people in this country existed only in the air. It teaches, moreover, grave lessons to those of us who thought that the people in this country had to be led in order to overthrow a government.

For what happened on Wednesday came from the hearts of the common people, not so much our intellectuals. It came despite significant failings on the part of public officials responsible for the conducting of elections, who should have acted with greater courage. This is where the real distinction lies between the elections this month and the many that have gone before. The people saw fit to take their future into their own hands and pray to the heavens above that, this time at least, it would work out better than the monumental failures of the past. In so doing, a salutary warning was posed not only to those displaced from the seats of government but also those succeeding to the same.

The following months will see Sri Lanka's 12th Parliament coming into being and we hope, with it, some genuine law making. Its predecessor, for the period of the one year that it remained - and that too, barely - in office, saw the rather obvious predictions coming true, an "almost hung" Parliament and the country on the road to that most extreme of happenings under Proportional Representation (PR), a fragmentation of the party system and shifting coalition governments. This had its own dynamics.

Writing immediately after the form-

ing of the parliamentary assembly last year, this column observed that the 11th Parliament will subject the Peoples Alliance Government and its President to a crucially demanding test of statesmanship which would determine the electoral future of the Peoples Alliance in this country. In observing thus, this column was not talking of Draft Constitutions being brought in haste before confused parliamentarians or a subverted judiciary or of politically opportunistic Bills like the Bill for electoral reform that was attempted to be brought in before the life of the 10th Parliament expired.

Opposition within and without Parliament stymied both pieces of legislation. Instead, what the Peoples Alliance and its leader Chandrika Kumaratunga was called upon to do was establish a new political culture, which, it had become clear, by that time, was imperative before any sustained initiative could have been taken on the North East conflict. Part of this culture was the establishing, on a clear political consensus and as a matter of priority, a strong Constitutional Council controlling appointments to high posts, an Elections Commission with extensive powers and its parallel Public Service Commission and Judicial Service Commission. Laws promoting an independent and responsible media culture were also called for.

Above all, the people needed to see positive moves by the legislature to lift this country out of its deeply frightening environment of election violence and a complete eradication of the "Wayamba" precedent. An essential part of this process was to ensure that the government strip immunity from all those responsible for blatant election malpractices in Kandy.

As the year progressed however, the 11th Parliament turned out to be the most farcical in the legislative history of this country. While the uncomfortable legislative presence of radical minority parties like the JVP resulted in a far less complacent law making, what we had was not a new political culture but political dialogues gradually deteriorating to unprecedented levels of brutality. A disastrously arrogant style of governance by the Kumaratunga administration soon propelled the dissolving of an unruly House scarcely before

(Continued from page 24)

and the Communist Party - failed to win any seat. They banked on getting into Parliament through the backdoor, the National List. The PA had nominated one communist party nominee, Raja Collure, and left out the LSSP. Batty Weerakoon its leader has now threatening to sue the PA for breach of trust. The old left had grown really old. It has no young members. The New Left too is also getting old. With Vasudeva Nanayakkara's defeat for the second time, there appears to be no one left.

its time was up. Events consequently proved that the mouse that was brought out by the JVP called the 17th Amendment, despite the heavy labour preceding its passing, was woefully deficient in all that it professed to achieve, even if it had operated at its peak. We had therefore a December election that far surpassed last year's election in its brutality but a peoples' vote that astoundingly gave cause to hope again. For Sri Lanka's 12th Parliament, the composition of which shows the system of Proportional Representation working at its most benign, the priorities that should have been addressed by its predecessor, still remain urgent concerns. They need to be brought about however by a thoughtful legislative process and not by confrontational political reasoning. Additionally, we need to see a complete overhauling of the current electoral system and electoral laws. More than ever, Wednesday's polls saw the emphasis on preferences together with the absence of an obligation to submit statements of expenditure (found in the earlier election laws) all adding up to making financial extravaganzas the determinant for capturing the vote.

In the face of these flamboyantly extravagant election campaigns carried out by most candidates, this week's elections demonstrated a clear need to enforce a ceiling on election expenditure. Current election laws in Sri Lanka do not regulate the amounts spent on canvassing and campaign excepting in specified contexts such as where such expenditures are termed an offence or a corrupt or illegal practice. Equally, well thought out amendments to the elections laws are necessary to prohibit the use of both the private and the public electronic media in a manner that favours one party over another. The misuse of the state media in favour of the Peoples Alliance in these elections was blatant and as some quip, was perhaps largely responsible for the overwhelming defeat that the government suffered.

For now, December, 2001 sees our proving - and in the nick of time - that we are not quite beyond the pale and that there are some shreds of sanity still left in us as a people. We now have a President and a Prime Minister of different political colours. Regardless, the mandate that the people have given to both of them this Wednesday to set right this tortured country is quite clear. We look to them for its fulfilment. □

APPRECIATION

P. P. Manikam: An Engineer who Made a Difference

P.P. Manikam, Professional Engineer and one time General Manager of the Ceylon Steel Corporation, passed away in August, 2001. The sad news of his death reached us rather late, here in Canada. I would like to add my appreciation to the tributes that have already been paid to Mr. Manikam, who should be gratefully remembered for his contributions as an engineer and for his tireless and voluntary pursuit of progressive social causes after his retirement. Along with the late Charles Abeysekera, who was the Chairman of the Steel Corporation when Manikam was its General manager, and Kumari Jayawardena, the well known author and Political Scientist, Manikam was a Member of Council of Management of the Social Scientists' Association and a keen supporter of its now well established periodical, *Pravada*.

I last saw him in Colombo, in December 1999, at the Hector Abhayavardhana Felicitation Symposium. To my great regret I failed to call on him when I was in Colombo in May of this year to complete the publication of the Hector symposium. Mr. Manikam was a good friend of Hector and would have been very happy with the completion of our *estschrift* to Hector. My reference to Hector Abhayavardhana has some meaning, because it was in Hector's study at 54 Chitra Lane that I first met Mr. Manikam twenty five years ago, in 1976. I was then a young engineer and in my first job at the State Engineering Corporation, Manikam was winding down after a long and successful career at the Ministry of Industries. Our subsequent interactions had little to do with engineering, for we had far more than professional common ground between us, although I did get to know from him and others about his long engineering career and his professional achievements.

Manikam studied Mechanical Engineering in England in the 1940s, thanks to his resourceful family in Kundasale, that was able to send him to England

for professional studies at that time. He once laughingly told me that the, now bulky, Thermodynamics and the Mechanics of Fluids text books that he used for his studies were thinner than the normal monitor's exercise books. In England, he did not limit himself to studying engineering but took a keen interest in the political debates and activities of the early postwar years that were charged with anti-colonial exuberance and socialist optimism. This experience, I believe, helped him to secure, early in life, the progressive and compassionate moral compass that would guide him throughout his working life, and the more important life outside work. After his retirement, he was able to find the opportunity to volunteer his time and energy to the cause of improving the life-conditions of the plantation community.

He started his engineering career at Industries when G.G. Ponnambalam was the Minister of Industries (1948-1953), and became the General Manager of Steel Corporation when Philip Gunawardana was the Minister between 1965 and 1970. According to Manikam, Ponnambalam was the ablest and the most dynamic Minister he had worked with, while, Philip Gunawardana, the most administratively efficient Minister in the first Bandaranaike cabinet, had, by 1965, lost his fire and lava and become a mere memory of the 'old volcano'. During the 1960s, Manikam did pioneering work in the setting up of industrial corporations, and in the creation of DFCC as a source of industrial credit. Industrial corporations became necessary because there were no private sector agencies capable of undertaking such ventures at the required scale and level of technology, although short-term political and electoral considerations often determined the location of state factories and interfered in their management. As an engineer, Manikam kept a healthy distance from the ebb and flow of political flavours, and preoccupied himself with the tasks of improving

quality and productivity in public sector industries. He tried to internalize for Sri Lanka, the better aspects of the Soviet and the Western systems of industrial production, particularly turning to the West to address the problem of industrial waste, a field that the Soviet Union ignored at its peril. More importantly, he was instrumental in bringing worker participation to the management of State Corporations long before NGO buzzwords, empowerment, participatory management etc, became commonplace as they are now.

He brought an engineering perspective to the complex problems of tea production and its social reproduction, which became his retirement passion. His monograph, *Tea Plantations in Crisis: An Overview*, is a delightful example of a thoughtful and socio-politically sensitized engineer's approach to public policy. The book blends well an engineer's *penchant* for brevity, numbers, details and systems, a full understanding of all aspects of the tea industry, and Manikam's deep insights of plantation life and his compassion for the plantation community. He saw the plight and the future of the plantation community in terms of its inextricable linkages to the current crisis and the future prospects of the tea industry as a whole. True to his profession, he did not stop with open-ended critiques of the plantation universe, but offered practical solutions to many of the problems on the ground, but went further and promoted several initiatives ranging from encouraging action oriented research by experts and scholars, NGO programmes, self-help housing and skills training. He worked with whatever organizations, groups, or individuals, who were active in the plantations, or whose services would be of benefit to the plantation community.

Those of us who knew him well will always remember his pleasant demeanour, quiet charm, deep culture, and enlightened humility. We will remember him for his punctuality and his ability to deliver on his promises. We will also remember him for his resilience and optimism. His beautiful house near Nugegoda, a spacious bungalow in a leafy and well planted garden, was burnt down during the riots of 1983. Even the plants were uprooted and destroyed. An avid collector of records, he had been

PAKISTAN

A Xenophobic Collective State of Mind

Dr Manzur Ejaz

We, the Pakistanis, living home or abroad, have become master-monologues, despising or ignoring the value of a dialogue among ourselves and with others. We have convinced ourselves of prime target of persecution and discrimination by others without any realization of our infinite propensity to do the same in our own society and to others. In the course of time, instead of recognizing the historical and socio-political realities we have started living by cliches. Such a xenophobic collective state of mind is, inadvertently, serving the interests of our misplaced state and the ruling elite that have consistently undermined the rights of common citizens for personal gains.

These days, the prized cliché is the American abandonment of Pakistan after the Soviet forced withdrawal from Afghanistan. Pakistani expatriates, interacting with the US politicians never miss a chance to remind them of their infidelity. Most of the time such questions are raised to prove patriotism among their selected peer groups. There is nothing wrong in bringing up this subject because the Americans did leave the region without fulfilling their responsibility. How-

collecting and filing newspaper records of every major national and international event during his life. All his collections went up in smoke. These were the rewards for years of dedicated service at the highest levels of Sri Lankan industry and in ungrudging conformity with the language laws. Manikam, his wife and their three sons were accommodated by Hector Abhayavardhana until they found a new house in Colombo. When most of us left the country after 1983, Manikam stayed on and recuperated, saw his sons establish themselves in life, and himself became part of a community of progressives who stood firm, bound by their common humanity and against tremendous odds. His family and friends will miss him dearly, and we who are far away will cherish our memories of him.

- By Rajan Philips, Waterloo, Canada

ever, American infidelity has become a cliché that is excessively used to cloak many debacles of our own making. Most Pakistanis believe that Pakistan has always stood by the US in difficult times. A common perception is that despite joining US lead SEATO and CENTO agreements Pakistan was not helped when it needed it the most in its war against India. Fact of the matter is that the US gave Pakistan arms, worth billions of dollars, to fight Communism. Wisely, Pakistan did not actively participate in any anti-Communist war other than jailing a few of its own left leaning activist intellectuals and retired military officials.

The SEATO and CENTO agreements were specifically designed to fight Communism and did not call for members' intervention if they are engaged in wars against non-Communist countries. Therefore, from the American angle, Pakistan misused its resources to fight India. Furthermore, if these were unfair agreements, Pakistani negotiators should have reviewed them closely before signing them. And, after it had been shown that the US is an unreliable ally, Pakistan should have terminated its close links with Americans and devised an alternative foreign policy. But, our governing elite, having vested interests in the US and its auxiliary international institutions, carried on their servile attitude with the richest superpower. Overwhelming majority of Pakistanis also believe that their country fought a proxy war against the Soviet Union for the US. It is an interesting episode. If one argues that the Soviet Union was defeated in Afghanistan with mammoth infusion of American (and Saudis) resources only, Zia-lovers start fuming. Quoting unpublished suspicious classified intelligence reports, they fervently assert that Zia had started anti-Soviet crusade much before the Americans showed any interest in Afghanistan. If this is true then the US helped Pakistan in its war against the Soviets and not the other way around. Nonetheless, it is amazing that the same Zia-lovers are usually in the forefront of accusing the US betraying Pakistan. Many enlightened Pakistanis were warning the Zia government of the pitfalls in its religious crusade in Afghanistan. Many scholars had predicted

that Pakistan's indulgence in the Afghan war would result in social anarchy, religious bigotry, and prevalence of drug and Kalashnikov culture. Pakistan's ruling junta was not willing to listen to any dissenting voice. Ziaul Haq and his Islamic comrades-in-arm were determined to drive the pagans out of Afghanistan and cleanse the Pakistani society of 'impure' Muslims. A record number of enlightened Pakistani activists were forced out of the country during this period. Ziaul Haq and his cronies had a free hand to use Pakistan for their immature ideas. Much before the US abandoned Pakistan after the Soviet withdrew from Afghanistan, Ziaul Haq had successfully subverted Pakistani society. As a result of Zia's Islamization, religious fundamentalists had usurped the entire social space for themselves. Ethnic divisions had hardened because of warlike conditions in Karachi and Sindh. Corruption was rampant and state institutions had become empty shells. Nonetheless, many army men and inventive business people had become millionaires and billionaires during this period. Inflow of huge foreign funds in the name of the Afghan war and billions of dollars transmitted by overseas Pakistanis created an economic boom in Pakistan. Means of their wealth notwithstanding, several hundred Pakistanis were added to the list of notorious thirty richest families. The situation was further exacerbated when the hungry politicians accelerated the process of loot and plunder. The banks were emptied and state-run institutions were robbed mercilessly. The irony is that the rich continued getting richer while the US had allegedly betrayed and abandoned Pakistan. However, common Pakistani citizens got the short shrift in the entire process that benefited the selected ones in the last two decades. One can, and may be should, blame the US for abetting the ruling elite that ruined Pakistani society. Of course the US abandoned Pakistan and Afghanistan like it left its other poor allies after the Cold War ended. Of all, Afghanistan has a very genuine grudge against the US for abandoning it after the devastation of a prolonged war: The US was a party in the war and had a responsibility to rebuild it. Pakistan's economy also suffered because of lamentable penalties imposed by the US. However, most of Pakistan's problems were of its own making and had started much before the US changed its colours. But our evergreen ruling elite has cleverly shifted the entire responsibility to the US betrayal. The elite of many poor countries uses such mischievous techniques to cover its tracks. The colonialists were blamed for every societal ill

Hare and Tortoise in Race for Parliament

COLOMBO, Dec 5 (AFP) - Rabbits, tortoises, elephants and eagles are in the running at Sri Lanka's parliamentary elections after a five week-long campaign often ruled by the law of the jungle.

Even though Sri Lanka boasts a high literacy rate in Asia, second only to Japan, parties are identified by symbols to ensure that even the few who are unable to read and write can vote by marking an X in front of a symbol.

Bull-drawn carts and three-wheel autorickshaws compete at the elections already marred by violence that claimed the lives of at least 41 people and wounded more than 700 others during the campaign period.

Some of the parties should be more appropriately identified by automatic assault rifles, rocket launchers and grenades rather than the classical musical instruments, and sail ships and anchors given to them.

There are 26 political parties and 120 independent groups in the fray, but some have entered the hustings only to canvass votes for one of the two main parties.

Most of the independent groups are in the running only to use the free radio and television air time allocated to the candidates irrespective of their support base. Hopping on the bandwagon is an in-

for a few decades after independence. Now, the US is blamed if anything that goes wrong. Even the road accidents and electricity breakdowns are considered to be the misdeeds of Uncle Sam. Anti-Americanism has become opium of the masses, often used to delude the people for covering sins of the ruling elite. This is duplicitous: As if this so-called indigenous elite would create a heaven for the common citizens had the US remained engaged. What did they do for their people when the US was throwing money at them? And, did the ruling elite stop looting national wealth while the US choose to remain disengaged? No one, having direct or indirect access to state power, stopped allotting residential and agricultural lands to themselves or looting the nations and its people. Of course the US is the big boy in the block who uses unfair and highhanded tactics to get its way. But, the main responsibility lies with the ones who are at the helm of the society. □

(The News International 25 November 2001)

dependent group which has a hare as its symbol. In the south of the island, another independent group is probably banking on slow-and-steady-wins-the-race and is fielding a tortoise.

The Sri Lanka National Front which has a cricket bat as its symbol is actually battling for the ruling party and has asked people to vote the "chair" symbol of President Chandrika Kumaratunga's People's Alliance.

Under election laws the exhibition of party symbols near polling booths on the day of voting is an offence, but most of the things used in a polling station - desks, chairs, tables, pens, clocks - are all party symbols.

Sri Lanka's only hijacker of an international jet liner, Sepala Ekanayake, who seized an Alitalia Boeing with 261 passengers in 1982, joined a party which has a single-engined aeroplane as its symbol.

The popular mode of three-wheel taxis is the symbol of the United Socialist Party (USP). The vocal Marxist JVP, or People's Liberation Front, is symbolised by a bell.

When it comes to a visible symbol with impact, it is hard to beat the elephant of the opposition United National Party (UNP). The party has been using domesticated elephants to get jumbo publicity for its campaign.

When the ruling People's Alliance suffered several defections to the UNP in October, cartoonists had a field day lampooning an elephant with wooden legs of the PA chair.

The back-to-the-basics Sinhala Urumaya or Sinhalese Heritage party choose a bow and arrow as their symbol from among several included in an official list of symbols with the election commissioner recently. But the nationalistic SU's choice had been rather unfortunate because the arrow in the official drawing is pointing towards the person drawing the bow. SU spokesman Thilak Karunaratne said they could not change the symbol, which is officially gazetted. The drawing cannot be altered without parliamentary approval to correct the direction of the arrow.

The hunting down of political opponents reached fever pitch forcing the authorities to deploy the army to maintain law and order. Election monitors have warned that "violence was murdering democracy" in Sri Lanka. □

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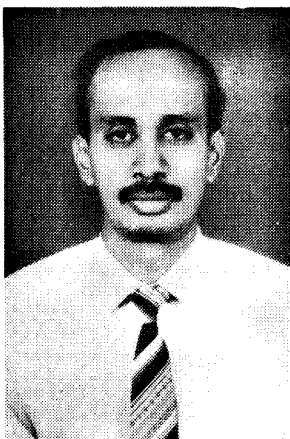
MATRIMONIAL

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional partner for their daughter, 30, 5'7-1/2", British born, in good employment in London. Please send details to M 1273 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional groom for their attractive daughter, 26, University diploma holder in Mathematics, following diploma course, British Computer Society in Colombo. Please send horoscope, details. M 1274 c/o Tamil Times.

Hindu sister in UK seeks groom for graduate sister, 36, teaching in Sri Lanka, willing to emigrate, Mars afflicted. Send horoscope, details. M 1275 c/o Tamil Times.

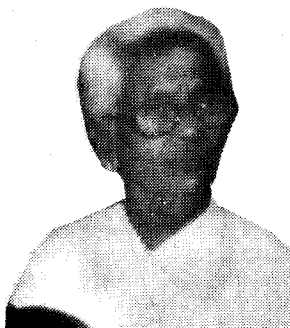
OBITUARIES



Jeyakumar (Chief Accountant, Trico International, Colombo); beloved son of Mr. & Mrs S. Maheswaran; loving husband of Saratha; affectionate father of Prasanthan, Senthuran and Shivanthy; brother of Balakumar (Australia); son-in-law of the late R.D. Mylvaganam and of Mrs. Nageswary Mylvaganam passed away on 26th October 2001 and was cremated at the Kanatte cemetery on 29th October in the presence of a large gathering

of his friends and relatives.

The members of the family thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes & messages of sympathy and helped them in several ways during the time of great sorrow. The Anthiesty ceremony took place on 10th November 2001 and the family wish to express their gratitude to all those who helped and attended the ceremony - 57, Edmonton Road, Kirillapone, Colombo 6. Tel. 852301.



Mrs. S. Ponnampalam; daughter of the late Dr. and Mrs. Rajah of Vannarannai and wife of the late Mr. Ponnampalam, formerly Director, North Ceylon Builders; sister of late Maheswary and mother of late Mahendran, Jaffna Hindu College passed away peacefully on 7th November 2001 and was cremated in London on 12th November. She is survived by her children Saraswathy, Vimaladevi, Dr. Nadarajah and Kandasamy; sons-in-law Kathirgamathamby and Varnakulasingham; daughters-in-law Pakialuxmy, Perinpajothy and Rekha;

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brothers **Manikavasagar** (Colombo), **Thirugnanasampanthar** and **Visuvanathan**, former Mayor of Jaffna; many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

The family wish to thank all relatives, friends and well wishers for their presence at the funeral; assistance and comfort in many ways during the period of bereavement - 23, Milton Road, London E17 4SP.

IN MEMORIAM



Mrs Chandra Ragupathy

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

Sadly missed and fondly

remembered as always by her loving husband Ragupathy. - 262 Wrinklemarsh Road, London SE3 8DW.

Eighth Death Anniversary of

Mrs. Gnanambikai Permumal Pillai

Wife of late Dr. C. Permumal Pillai



(04.07.1924 - 12.12.1993)
Amma

Eight years have drifted by, since you were taken from our midst. Your loving care and gentle guidance still strongly missed. In your peace, we find solace.

Your children Ravi, Usha, Jeeva and Ranjit and families.

Fifth Death Anniversary



'Five years have since gone but you will be remembered' In ever loving and precious memory of **Mr. Kanapathipillai Sivagnanam** on the Fifth anniversary of his passing away on 18th December 1996.

Greatly loved and sadly missed by his wife Navaratnammah (Sri Lanka); loving children Dr. Sasikala (UK), Sasilatha (UK), Arulparam (UK), Dr. Agilan (Sri Lanka), Dr. Kannan (Sri Lanka), Rajanthan (UK) and Rajeev (Medical Faculty, University of Jaffna); son-in-law Nanthakumaran; daughters-in-law Nanda, Dr. Suraby and Dr. Kalyani; grandchildren Arun, Ashwin and Niesha; other relatives and friends. - 24, Brinkworth Road, Clayhall, Essex IG5 0JS. Tel: 0208 9242929.

Tenth Anniversary Remembrance



Mr. Sangarapillai Nadarajah (Former Assistant General Manager, Bank of Ceylon) passed away on 16th December 1991.

**'A decade has passed
Since we saw you last
The loving days of yours
Still remembered by us'**

Fondly remembered by his wife Lalitha; children Dr. Bhamini and Dr. Aravindhan; son-in-law Mohan; daughter-in-law Dr. Sri Ranjini; grand children Niroshan, Prasana and Ashwini; brothers Selvanayagam (Toronto), Pan-chacharam (Montreal); sister Kamaladevi (Colombo); sister-in-law Dr. Saratha Rajasimman; all friends and relatives - 75, Endsleigh Court, Lexden, Colchester C03 3QW.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Jan 1 Feast of Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.

Jan 2 Sankadakra Sathurthi.

Jan 5 South London Tamil Welfare Group (SLTWG) Drop In. Tel: 020 8542 3285.

Jan 6 Feast of The Epiphany.

Jan 7 Feast of St. Raymond.

Jan 9 Krishna Eekathasi.

Jan 11 Prathosam.

Jan 12 SLTWG Drop In. Tel: 020 8542 3285.

Jan 13 Ammavasai; Feast of St. Hilary.

Jan 14 Thai-Pongal.

Jan 17 Sathurthi; Feast of St. Anthony.

Jan 19 Shashti; SLTWG Pongal Celebrations. Tel: 020 8542 3285.

Jan 22 Feast of St. Vincent.

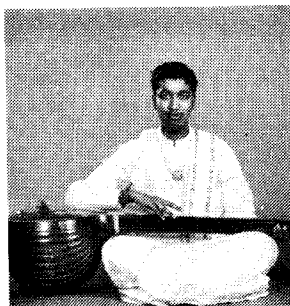
Jan 23 Karthigai.

Jan 25 Sukkla Eekathasi.

Jan 26 Sani Prathosam.

Jan 28 Full Moon; Thai Poomam.

Jan 31 Sankadakra Sathurthi; Feast of St. John Bosco.

Sharavanan's
Karnatic Vocal
Arangetram

On Saturday, 27th November 2001 the Lewisham Theatre was bedecked and decorated ready for the Karnatic Vocal Arangetram or first Solo concert of 17-year-old Sharavanan Jeyanathan. He is the 21st Arangetram student of Smt. Sivasakthi Sivanesan of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, West Kensington, where she is resident teacher of South Indian Music. She is famous for her dedication and devotion to her Karnatic music and her students.

The pre performance pooja to Goddess Saraswathie, Lord Nadaraja and the great Trinity of Karnatic music was followed by seeking the blessings of Bhagawan Sri Sathiya Sai Baba. This set the tone of true devotion to the divine and to the great tradition of Karnatic music. An opening ceremony at which the Chief Guest who had come specially from India, Prof. T.V. Gopalakrishnan and the Guests of Honour lit the lamps - welcomed the thousand or so audience into the auditorium to face the stage with its striking backdrop of the dancing Lord Nadaraja. As is usual for Bhavan students, Sharavanan was to be accompanied by Bhavan's resident teachers, Sri Balu Raghuraman - Violin and Sri M. Balachandar - Mirudangam. The other accompanists were Sri Omkar Rao Gatam, Sri Kandiah Sithamparanathan - Morsing and Selvi Mathini Ruthra-Rajan - Tambura.

The performance began in traditional style, with Varnam, 'Nera Nammitinaya' in praise of Lord Vishnu. Composed by Ramanad Srinivasa Iyengar in Raga Kanada, talam Kanda Ata this piece with its 14 beat tala immediately demonstrated that we were hearing a confident and accomplished young musician, with an excellent breath control, strong sense of rhythm and a melodious flexible voice, that convey the mood of both the raga and the sahitiya the libretto of the piece.

'Ganapathi Niye' in Raga Hamsadhvani, talam Adi by Lalitadasa followed beginning with a beautiful alapana demonstrating the subtleties and elaboration of the raga. Here Sharavanan's singing of Kalpana Svaram was another great pleasure. As Prof. TV Gopalakrishnan said, his voice in depth and quality reminds one of Chittur Subramaniam in his youth. Saint Tyagaraja's justly famous Pancharatnam kriti 'Entaro Mahanubhavulu' in Sri raga, tala Adi was another joy, the range and depth of Sharavanan's voice conveying both the glories of the raga and the meaning of the composition very movingly. The charanam was sung most effectively in mandra sthai and his interaction with his violinist and percussionist was very

professional.

The first half of the concert closed with the main item 'Anandam Paramanandame' by Sri Srinivas in Raga Khambhogi, tala Adi. Beginning with a lovely alapana, Sharavanan went on to elaborate the piece with an apparently effortless niraval, melodic improvisation and very satisfying swaras. His evident enjoyment and the sharing of a lively tanyavartanam with his percussionist brought reminders of his mridangam Arangetram together with his elder brother Shankar a few years ago.

'Ananda nadamaduvur' by Nilakanda Sivan in Raga Purvi Kalyani, tala Rupaka - a very appropriate song with the painting of Lord Nataraja dominating the background - preceded the central and the most demanding item in any Karnatic music kachcheri the Ragam Tanam Pallavi. The Raga was Shanmukhapriya - a great favourite of Sharavanan's Guru Smt Sivasakthi - tala KhandaTripudai. By now we knew that improvisation and melodic fluency are two of Sharavanan's great strengths and both were shown together with his rhythmic virtuosity and range depth and quality of his voice enhanced by his excellent breath control. Shorter pieces completed the programme including Yalppanam Sri Veeramani Iyer's 'Katpaga Valli' in Ragamalika and two songs by the famous Tamil poet Sri Subramaniya Bharathiyar. A devotional Bhajan dedicated to Bhagavan Sri Sathiya Sai Baba preceded the lively Thillana in Raga Kadanakutuhalam composed by the Chief Guest Prof. T.V. Gopalakrishnan.

Sharavanan's brother Shankar thanked their devoted Guru, his excellent supporting musicians for their beautiful and sympathetic accompaniments, their dear parents, his distinguished Chief Guest and Guests of Honour, his splendid compere Sri Wimal Sockanathan, his friends and helpers and all his guests for their love and support. Sharavanan closed the concert with a verse from Thirupugal in Raga Hamsanadam by Swami Arunagirinathar and a Mangalam in Raga Saurashtra by Saint Tyagaraja.

continued on page 31

HOW YOU HAVE HELPED S.C.O.T.

The kindness and generosity of supporters has enabled The Standing Committee Of The Tamil Speaking People (SCOT) to continue the most needed humanitarian work listed below during the financial year September, 2000 to August, 2001.

- 1) **Assisi Boys' Home, Kurukkalmadam:**
Running costs for 50 boys £500
- 2) **Centre For Elders, Onthachimadam:**
Food, clothing & medicine for 50 elders £500
- 3) **Elders Society Union, Kalmunai:**
Food, clothing and medicine for 58 elders £500
- 4) **Hindu Council Of Sri Lanka, Colombo:**
Immediate relief (dry rations) to Batticaloa flood victims £1000
- 5) **Mangayarkarasyar Mahalir Illam, Sengunthar Street:**
Educational items, food & clothing for 45 girls £500
- 6) **People's Welfare Association, Kiran:**
Income generation for poor families by goat rearing £500
- 7) **Sri Ramakrishna Mission, Batticaloa:**
Free medical clinic in remote areas £500
- 8) **Sri Nadarajanandanaji Rehabilitation Institute, Sittandy :**
Purchase of land to put up 'make shift' shelter for 30 children £500
- 9) **VaalVosai School For Hearing Impaired Children / YMCA:**
Running cost for 40 children £500
- 10) **Vipulananda Children's Home, Akkaraipatru:**
Running cost for 75 orphans £500
- A. Total for Batticaloa Region £5500**
- 11) **Annai Illam, Kilinichchi:** Counselling for the victims and families of the long running war £500
- 12) **Canara Holy Cross Sisters, Vavuniya:**
Dry rations to the aged 90 in number £1000
- 13) **Centre For Women & Development, Vannarponnai:**
Nutrition mix for pregnant mothers and pre-school children £600
- 14) **Federation Of Hindu Associations Northern Province, Kokuvi:** Dry rations to the displaced victims in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaitivu & Vavuniya. £1000
- 15) **Grace Home For Children, Cheddikulam:**
Running cost of the home for 10 boys £500
- 16) **Hindu Board Of Education, Thirunelvely:** Purchase of beds, tables, chairs, cupboards, books etc for 200 children £3000
[£2000 was donated by Mr Sivapalan (SCOT member) & friends]
- 17) **Jaffna Diocese Of The Church Of South India, Colombo:** Food items, shelter, cooking utensils, clothing etc for people who took refuge in Manipay & Vaddukodai area. £2000
- 18) **Jaffna General Hospital Development Association, Jaffna** Purchase 'life-saving' drugs £6145

[£500 each was donated by Wimbledon Ganapathy Temple, Ealing Sri Durgai Amman Kovil & Mayor of Southwark].

- 19) **Manitha Neyam Home Trust Colombo:**
Running cost of the Deaf / Blind Children & the aged in Kilinochchi & Vavuniya. £500
- 20) **Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, Jaffna Branch:**
to provide Health Education in remote areas £1000
- 21) **Sri Ramakrishna Sarada Seva Ashrama, Pt. Pedro:**
School items, bun, milk for poor school children & free medical clinic. £2673
- [Fund was raised by MADRAS & ASIA via the coordinator, Mr Ganeson, (SCOT member) and Misses Sinduja Sivanesan & Ramani Rajaratnam (school children)].
- 22) **'Vaazhvaham' Home For The Visually Handicapped, Manipay:** Essential adapted equipments (white walking canes, braille, talking watches etc. for 5 boys & 11 girls £2500
[£2000 was donated by Mr Kulatungam (SCOT member)]
- 23) **Yogar Swami Thiruvadi Nilayam, Kilinochchi:**
Running cost of the home which cares for 89 displaced elders, including those from Kaithady Elders Home. £500

B. Total for Jaffna Region £21791

- 24) **Hindu Samaya Abhivritti Sabha, Orr's Hill:** 'Hand Operated Tricycles' for land-mine victims and other disabled £500
[£100 was contributed by Dr Veeravagu (SCOT member)]
- 25) **Sri Shanmuga Girls' Home, Vidyalayam Road:** Construction of a tank to store the precious resource of water £750
- 26) **Trincomalee District Young Men's Development Aham, Muthur:** Running cost of a hostel for 50 students £500
- 27) **Trincomalee District Refugees Welfare Association, Inner Harbour Rd.:** School items for 65 destitute children £500

C. Total for Trincomalee Region : £2250

- 28) **High Commission Of India, London:** Urgent relief for the earthquake victims £100
- 29) **'Hostel Bernarda' Holy Cross Convent, Colombo:**
Running cost of the hostel for girls from displaced families from North & East £500
- 30) **Jesuits Refugee Service, Colombo:** Support for remand prisoners and their families £500

D. Total for others £1100

GRAND TOTAL FOR 2000/2001 £30641

I sincerely thank each and every one for the support which provides hope for many.

K Pathmaseni

Project Officer - SCOT, 107 Coleman Court, Kimber Road, London SW18 4PB.

continued from page 30

This has been a most memorable magical evening. Here we had seen a young man do immense promise in many fields ascending the stage. May his God given gift and his own hard work always bring joyful music to the world.

Wendy Marr

With this issue the Tamil Times completes twenty years of service, thanks its readers for their patronage and support and wishes them a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year

A Message for Young Tamils Abroad

Plough the fields of ancestry - dig deep knowing your roots is what matters. The battle to retain a Tamil identity - our people weep All that bloodshed with Life in tatters! Yet Young Tamils - forward you must venture Awake! Be aware! You are the future Tamil Nation. Sensitised, enriched by foreign cultures. Set your own goals and reach your destination Confused, at the crossroads, which way to turn? Caught between cultures - take your stance. Privileged, with varied careers - values to learn

A rich Tamil culture is your inheritance.

Parents for your security abroad have strived Despite the shattering of their dreams and visions Tamils uprooted - families scattered far and wide They've risen to the challenge, made it life's mission.

As the settled Tamil community abroad have observed Its easy to sink into the abyss of cultural alienation Identity and enrichment from a heritage preserved Is 'empowerment' through resistance to total annihilation.

Punitham Perinparaja (nee Ambalavan-er) Teacher/Equal Opportunities Coordinator

Sundha – The Unofficial Ambassador

Veerasingham Sundharalingam born in Kovil Kudiyiruppu, Chavakachcheri – later known by a multitude of names – Radio Ceylon Sundha, Parliament Sundha, Appolo Sundha and finally BBC Sundha, Signed Off for his last time recently in Australia.

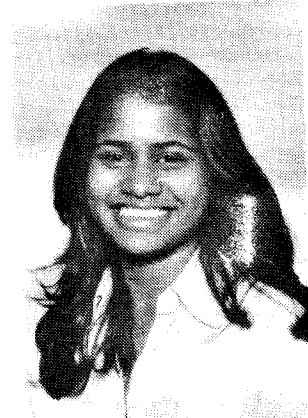
Stage Dramatist, Broadcaster, Parliament simultaneous interpreter, BBC World Service Acting Producer and later Representative of BBC in Madras had his early education at Driebergs College. He was fascinated by the News reading style of All India Radio's English News reader Melville de Mello. In the early fifties he went to take up a job in Government service as all other Tamils in Jaffna. While in Colombo, he was chosen as a Radio Drama actor by Radio Ceylon and was later recruited as a Tamil Announcer by

the then chief Dr. K.S. Nadarajah.

Thus started the illustrious career of a Man – who later dominated the field of Tamil Broadcasting in the sub continent for five decades. If Adayar Kalakshetra is considered the Mecca of Bharatha Natyam, so is Radio Ceylon, (later known as Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation) in Tamil Broadcasting. Those of us who were trained by stalwarts like Sundha, Mrs. Ponmani Kulasingham, V.A. Gaffoor, and Punniyamoorthy under the guidance of men like Dr. K.S. Nadarajah owe our fame and reputation to our training under those Gurus in that Grand Institution.

I do not propose to dwell on the qualities of late Sundha – one of my mentors in my career in Broadcasting, but to make the task easier I have reproduced excerpts from a Memorial Souvenir published by his friends in London.

Rising Star Wants Asian Actresses to 'break taboo'



Theatre's brightest new British Asian star Sarah Rajeswaram believes she can pave the way for more Asian girls to break into acting, when she stars in this year's funniest pantomime. Student Sarah, 19, whose parents originate from Sri Lanka, will play Aladdin's love interest at the Theatre Royal in Stratford.

'I want to see more Asian actresses on stage, and they need to come forward to break the taboo. By seeing Asian actresses on stage physically, the Asian community will accept them mentally and feel compelled to go to the theatre,' says Sarah.

The Theatre Royal has gone on record as saying it is keen to encourage participation from ethnic minorities, especially Asians, and the casting of Sarah Rajeswaram in one of the lead roles is testament to that.

From the age of eight, Sarah began her training in classical Asian dance form, Bharatha Natyam and at 16 completed her Arangetram – a three-hour solo performance. Sarah's hard work, drive and ambition means she is often in rehearsals as well as running to lectures and her motto is 'you don't have to fulfil one role or the other – you can do them all'.

Something of a role model for young aspiring actresses out there, she is currently in her second year studying History and Politics at Oxford University and has trained at the Italia Conti Associates School. With a record number of acting and singing performances under her belt, she is particularly proud to be working with the Theatre Royal.

Sarah agrees: 'The Theatre Royal has made a bold step in casting two ethnic leads in its pantomime show, which is from 1st December 2001 to 26th January 2002. It caters for its culturally diverse community and the choice of cast reflects that. In this day and age there are so many issues with inter-racial marriages and mixed religion marriages, through theatre, ethical lessons can be learnt and issues of multiculturalism can be tackled.'

(Asian Xpress, November 30, 2001).

Sundha – A Dear Friend

'When I returned to Ceylon in 1956 after my music studies in Kalakshetra my first job was as assistant music program organizer at Radio Ceylon. It was here that I first met him and since he had the same name as my father, even though the spelling was different we became very good friends and worked together as a 'father and son' team. From then on he was Sundha and I was Sathy.

Sundha has a unique stentorian voice always identified as the voice of the then Tamil Radio Ceylon and later the voice of Tamil BBC. With his deep knowledge of Tamil his presentations were crisp and creative.'

– S. Sathyalingam, Singapore

Our Dear Sundha Mama

'Mama was a man who was gifted with the envious talent of making friends. Friends and colleagues remember him with affection and admiration, from all over the world. This is a great virtue. That is how we will remember our dear Sundha Mama. He held a special place in our mind. A place he made sure in his own inimitable way, remains well and truly yours. It is sad that you have left us forever and traveled to the celestial paradise. You are free of pain and free of suffering. But we live with the pain of loss. Your family is full of sorrow. Our thoughts are always with them and of course with you.'

– Dr. Manjubhashini Sivanathan, London

The Sundha of Adayar

'When one reaches the age of seventy, (as I have done), one gets more and more conscious of that eternal verity of life – the human mortality. Death begins to snatch your friends one by one leaving you poorer and poorer, sad and shaken-up, but yet philosophic.

When I sat down to write this piece, I began to take count of his many friends, I stumbled on something that suely was an amazing fact : he had a circle of friends who, individually and collectively, were men of varied talents and outstanding achievements in their own right. How did Sundha manage to gather round him such a galaxy of talents? Like a philatelist who had a collection of rare stamps? What quality was there in him that made this possible? In Adayar in Madras where he was in his true element, he was the SUN(dha) around whom many of these human STARS revolved, both during music season and out of season. Some of them, alas, are no longer in the land of the living – Sivapathasundaram, the 'presiding deity' of broadcasting, SK Pararajasingam, Aiyathurai Sivanadam. Farewell, dear friend.

– S. Sivanayagam London

Sundha – A Soulmate

'If one were to illustrate a friendship by example it was mine with Sundha. It was a classic example of soul mates sharing, caring and giving for each other. His capacity for everlasting association and comradeship is beyond any form of description. Every minute spent or exchanged with him was productive and the years we spent together were mutually beneficial, full of joy. Sundha's exuberant personality always attracted well-meaning friends. He was enormously human and his capacity for care and concern for others placed him a few notches above a lot. His wit and humour were an essential part of him.'

– Siva Sivanathan, London

Wimal Sockanathan

Over 20 Years of Tamil Drama



The Tamil Performing Arts Society appears to be the only remaining dramatic group in England continuing to stage Tamil plays against all odds. Their determination over the past twenty odd years should be congratulated.

Two weeks ago they were invited by an exclusively English Theatre Hall known as the Secombe Theatre, to stage a Festival of Tamil Drama. Versatile Actor K. Balendra, who is also a theatre do-it-all (Lights man, Stage craft designer, director), presented 3 plays.

The First Play was a serious story titled 'Mazhai' (Storm) scripted by a celebrated South Indian playwright Professor Indra Parthasarathy. The Third one was also a serious play which had the contemporary Jaffna situation as its backdrop where the average Tamils were under siege by the Sinhala Army. Titled 'Kaathiruppu' (The Waiting) – the script was by actor Vasudevan. The play had its maiden run at the Secombe Theatre that night.

Sandwiched between these two serious plays was an interesting performance by students of the Brent Tamil School – Titled 'Vedarai Uchchiya Vellai Purakkal' (White Doves Which Cheated the Huntsmen). The title may have been considered as lengthy, boring and unintelligible according to the failing Tamil knowledge of some fans of today's generation. They may have been put off partly because they considered this a Jungle story and partly because they could not bother to check up the meaning of the word 'Uchchiya'! In real fact this was an unforgettable performance by

the youngsters not more than 12 or 15 years of age. I loved watching the performance of the two tiny Kunchu Puraahs (not more than 3 or 4 feet in height and dressed in pure white with feathers) the two sweet little girls stole my heart. The Music and Dance Choreography provided blended well and the children did justice to the wonderful script by Professor Mounaguru. The melody of the Theme song 'Chinna Chinna Kuruvihal' was familiar to me and brought memories of the period at Sri Lanka's Broadcasting Corporation when the Professor and his wife Chithra were my contemporaries in the Tamil Programmes Unit. I must also mention that the Professor's same song was sung by (now Paris based) reputed singer M.A. Kulaseelanathan in 1974 when the Song was a hit on SLBC airwaves.

Coming back to the first play, 'Mazhai' – it was an appropriate and apt title. The Original Story was by Tennessee Williams adapted in Tamil by Professor Parthasarathy. The Story revolves around a retired Professor (Vasudevan) spending his retirement in sickbed surrounded by medicines and books on Psychology. He is cared for by his spinster daughter (Anantharani) who has missed the matrimonial bus. His son (Balendra) has left home after an argument. The only visitor to the house is Dr. James (Krishnarajah) his personal physician, who himself had a broken marriage. Mazhai portrays the clash of feelings among these depressed characters. The dialogue has been written in simple Jaffna colloquial Tamil to be easily assimilated by the majority of the audience. Balendra comes out with flying colours by his natural acting talent. The laughter from the audience when he was scaring his sister by his sarcastic dialogues showed the audience were mesmerised by his acting. I liked Anantharani's portrayal of spinster Nir-mala. This Character's edginess and nervousness which were the external manifestations of her internal frustrations could not have been bettered by any other actress. To the inimitable Krishnarajah (the actor, artiste, artist, stage controller and a jack of everything) this Dr. Character was a feather in his cap.

I am not sure about the future of Tamil Drama in Tamil Nadu due to the detrimental impact of Tamil Cinema and now by the multitude of Tamil TV stations in Chennai, but I would confidently say whatever number of Tamil Movies shown here and whatever Tamil TV Channels exist in Europe, as long as Balendra and his untiring Troupe keep on staging plays, Tamil Drama in Europe would be kept alive and kicking.

– Wimal Sockanathan.

Seva Activities For Displaced People

The displaced persons in the uncleared area of Wannai and in Vavuniya are leading a miserable life. Due to the conflict situation in the Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Vavuniya and Mannar districts, several thousands of families have become homeless and are living in refugee camps or with their friends and relatives. Vavuniya has become the focal point in this area as several thousands of displaced persons trickle into Vavuniya mainly from the Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi districts. There are 15 refugee camps in Vavuniya to house around 18,000 refugees. The situation in the uncleared areas is deplorable due to the high cost of living and lack of employment to get the means of livelihood. The Sai Seva centre in Vavuniya has taken the following steps to help these unfortunate people. (a) Supply of leaf porridge (Illai Kanchi) to children in refugee camps 6 days a week. (b) Free Mobile Medical Service in two adopted villages. (c) Distribution of milk food to children under two years of age in two adopted villages. (f) Conducting 10 pre schools in backward villages. (g) Academic Scholarships for 18 students in 9 schools. (h) Donation of inter ocular lenses to cataract patients. (i) Application of chlorine to wells. (j) Co-ordination of activities for the fabrication of artificial limbs for amputees in the Wannai area. (k) Footwear protection free service at temples. (l) Shramadana activities in cemetery. (m) Distribution of clothes received from foreign countries to the needy. (n) Supply of meals, a day in a month to the children of Anpam Annai Thresa Orphanage at Pampaimadu, Vavuniya.

The establishment of an Orphanage (Sai Childrens Centre), primarily for the benefit of children of the uncleared area, affected by the internal war, has been one of the main projects of the Seva Centre at a cost of Rs.2.92 millions for purchase of land, construction of building and provision of furniture and fittings. The building work is in progress on land in Koomankulam in the Vavuniya District. The extensive land adjoining the buildings will be utilised for agricultural training of the students with the added benefit of the food items produced being used by the orphanage. The Seva Centre has with the assistance of the Sai Organisation in Kenton, UK planned a project for the year 2002 to get 1000 cataract operations to be done in Vavuniya with the help of eye surgeons from UK.

The Chairman of the Bhagavan Sai Sathya Sai Seva Centre, Mr. S. Ragu-nathapillai, Additional Government Agent, Vavuniya, directs all the activities. The centre appeals for assistance from well wishers of this humanitarian project. The address and other details of the Seva Centre office are Prasanthi Street, Vavuniya, Sri Lanka, Tel: 00942422203 Fax: 00942422212.

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