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Cabinet minister Milinda Morogoda shaking hands with LTTE's Col. Karuna (top) and Anton Balasingham & G L Peiris planting cannon ball - sal - tree marking the second round of talks in Bangkok (below)



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*"I do not agree with a word
of what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it."*

-Voltaire

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Returning to Normal Life

There is no doubt that the second round of peace talks lasting four days held in Bangkok between the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE produced further progress in the ongoing peace process. The discussions resulted in reaching certain key decisions including the setting up of three Sub-Committees on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs, De-escalation and Normalisation and Political Matters. An agreement was also reached between the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader Rauf Hakeem and the LTTE on the sensitive security and interests of the Muslim community inhabiting the eastern province. It was also decided that a political-level conference attended by prospective donor countries would be convened by Norway to be held on 25 November in Oslo with aim of mobilising financial support for humanitarian and rehabilitation activities.

Already senior government officials and LTTE representatives, including high-ranking military men from both sides, have met to discuss and take measures relating to humanitarian, de-escalation and normalisation activities.

Substantial changes have taken place since the peace process began and particularly after the signing of the Ceasefire Agreement in February this year. The fighting has stopped. Approximately 150,000 internally displaced people have returned to their home areas. People are moving between the north and south freely. Arbitrary arrests and detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act have ceased. The substantial majority of those detained under the PTA have been released. The Attorney General has withdrawn hundreds of pending cases instituted under the PTA. The LTTE has opened a large number of political offices all over the north-east. High-ranking LTTE personnel are visiting Colombo to take medical treatment in hospitals, and its delegates to peace talks in Thailand have been flying from the Colombo airport using passports issued by the Government. LTTE's political positions are being freely articulated in Colombo-based newspapers and in Parliament by MPs belonging to the Tamil Nationalist Alliance. Colombo-based and visiting diplomats have been travelling to the Wannu to meet the senior leadership of the LTTE.

While all this is happening, what is important is that the people primarily inhabiting the war-torn areas of the northeast must also feel that life is gradually returning to normal. People have suffered immensely through the years of war and the many unceasing battles. Normal civilian life turned into a nightmare as the areas of the northeast became subjected to a high degree of militarisation and regimentation. Besides the horrors of war, arbitrary interference in their lives and deprivation of their basic rights became the norm. The exigencies of war and the demands made upon the people had turned them into just compliant members of a militarised and regimented society. The existence of a civil society was simply dismissed. The people's right to the most basic freedoms were considerably curtailed or in many spheres totally suppressed in the name of a higher calling - liberation from oppression by the enemy.

The once sworn enemies are now parleying exchanging generous compliments about each other's abiding commitment to the peace process. The LTTE has also promised to join the democratic political mainstream. The true test of the LTTE's promise depends on the extent to which the people are let free to exercise their basic democratic rights and freedoms. Children, students, parents, women, teachers, doctors, nurses, traders, peasants, workers, social workers, political and human rights activists and other sections of society must be able to enjoy and exercise their democratic rights and freedoms in their individual capacity and collectively without arbitrary interference. Anything less would not be a return to normal life.

Normalisation of the life of the people has been spotlighted and emphasised as a pre-requisite for further progress in the peace process. The people of the north-east also must have the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of such normalisation. They would expect substantial changes on the ground to enable them also to lead a normal life freed from the constraints that have been arbitrarily imposed upon them. An intensified process of demilitarisation and de-regimentation of society accompanied by a process of 'civilianisation' of the political, social and economic life of the people has become an essential precondition if life is to return truly normal.

The call to country's Prime Minister and the LTTE leader by the Catholic Bishop of Mannar is quite timely. His call is that the peace process must be underpinned by the guarantee of, as a minimum, the following: Freedom of speech and assembly, Access to information without any hindrance, Freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, Freedom from any form of physical abuse and torture, Right to a fair judicial process and system, Freedom from any form of duress, Freedom of movement within the entirety of the country, Right to security, and Right to ownership of property.

PEACE TALKS

Progress in Second Round

The key decisions made at the second round of talks held in Bangkok between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam with Norwegian facilitation are:

(a) setting up of a Sub-Committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs in the North and East;

(b) convening a political-level meeting of key governments to take place in Oslo, Norway on 25 November 2002 aimed at mobilizing financial support for immediate humanitarian and rehabilitation action;

(c) formation of a Sub-Committee on De-Escalation and Normalization as a mechanism for a structured dialogue between the parties;

(d) Setting up of a Sub-Committee on Political Matters to address a series of complex political questions in order to reach a negotiated solution to the ethnic conflict, including constitutional, legal, political and administrative issues; and

(e) an agreement to improve the security situation in eastern Sri Lanka.

The following is the text of the press release headed "Significant Steps to Restore Normalcy, Improve Security and Address Political Matters" issued by the Norwegian Government after the second round of talks:

"The Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) conducted the second session of the Sri Lanka Peace Talks at the Rose Garden in Thailand from 31 October to 3 November 2002.

The parties demonstrated a positive, pragmatic and conciliatory approach in discussing a wide range of issues, including present challenges as well as matters relating to long-term solutions. The parties thereby continued the dual approach of moving step by step towards a lasting political settlement, while remaining fully focused on the ground situation. The parties reconfir-

med their strong commitment to the Ceasefire Agreement and their support for the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission.

Against the backdrop of recent tensions among the ethnic communities in the east, the parties agreed on immediate measures to improve the security situation, inter-ethnic co-operation and respect for human rights in the north and east. Acknowledging that peace belongs to all peoples of Sri Lanka, the parties are committed to accommodate the needs and aspirations of all three communities in the east: Tamils, Muslims, and Sinhalese. The agreed measures are outlined in a separate statement issued by the Royal Norwegian Government on 1 November 2002.

In their determination to move the peace process forward, the parties reiterated that the process will be a long and demanding one. Throughout the process, the parties will continuously monitor the ground situation, thus enabling necessary action to be taken at all stages to ensure further progress.

In the quest for a final settlement, a broad range of issues must be addressed with considerable attention to detail. For this purpose, the parties agreed on establishing, whenever needed, sub-committees to act on specific matters under the auspices of the negotiation teams. The sub-committees will be continually active and report at the sessions of the talks, in order to accelerate progress and give in-depth attention to issues.

Following the agreement at the first session of talks to set up a joint task force, the parties agreed to establish this in the form of a Sub-Committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs in the North and East. The role of the Sub-Committee will be to:

- Identify humanitarian and rehabilitation needs;
- Prioritize implementation of activities to meet these needs;
- Decide on the allocation of the financial resources for such activities;

Determine implementing agencies for each of the activities.

The Sub-Committee will ensure the involvement of all ethnic communities so that their needs and aspirations are considered, and it will give priority to the mobilization of local labor and local institutions in the implementation of activities. The activities initiated by the Sub-Committee will be financed by a fund, which will be set up in accordance with arrangements to be agreed upon with donor governments.

The Sub-Committee will consist of four members selected by the LTTE and four by the GOSL. Two members of the respective negotiating teams, Mr. Tamilselvan of the LTTE and Mr. Bernard Goonetilleke of the GOSL, will be leading members of the Sub-Committee. Other GOSL representatives will include Mr. M.D.D. Peiris, Mr. M.I.M. Rafeek, and an additional member of the Muslim community. Other LTTE representatives will include Mr. Jay Maheswaran. The Sub-Committee will be assisted by a secretariat to be located in the Government Agent's Office in Killinochchi. Meetings of the Sub-Committee will be held in Killinochchi, Colombo, Batticaloa, and Kalmunai at the discretion of the committee.

As its first task the Sub-Committee will assist the Royal Norwegian Government in preparing for a political-level meeting of key governments to take place in Oslo, Norway on 25 November 2002. As the first ever of its kind, the meeting will demonstrate the unprecedented level of international support to Sri Lanka and to the parties in their present peace efforts. The meeting will aim at mobilizing financial support for immediate humanitarian and rehabilitation action in three priority areas agreed by the parties:

- Resettling and rehabilitating Internally Displaced Persons;
- Rehabilitating war-affected women and children;
- Providing livelihoods for war-affected people in the North and East.

The international community will further be encouraged to increase investment in Sri Lanka and respond positively to new challenges in the south resulting from the peace process.

In line with the overall objective of facilitating the resettlement of inter-

nally displaced persons, the parties acted on the decision made at the first session of peace talks to address matters relating to high security zones and other areas made inaccessible to the public. To this end, a Sub-Committee on De-Escalation and Normalization was set up as a mechanism for a structured dialogue between the parties. While accommodating the security concerns of each party, the Sub-Committee will examine ways and means to ensure resettlement, the return of private property and the resumption of economic activities in these areas. This Sub-Committee will include high-level civilian and military personnel on both sides, including Mr. Austin Fernando of the Ministry of Defense and Mr. Karuna of the LTTE.

As another issue relating to the restoration of normalcy, the status of Tamil prisoners held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act was discussed.

The parties remain committed to building peace on the ground through practical steps to improve security and opportunity in people's daily lives. At the same time, the parties acknowledged that the peace talks must address a series of complex political questions in order to reach a negotiated solution to the ethnic conflict, including constitutional, legal, political and administrative issues. Following discussions, the parties agreed to establish a Sub-Committee to commence work in connection with relevant political matters. The parties agreed that access to expertise on political matters will be important in order for them to enter into negotiations on issues central to the peace process. The parties will jointly and separately address in depth, at the current stage of the peace process, relevant subjects such as other peace processes, political solutions to ethnic conflicts, models and systems of government, issues of post-conflict transition, co-ordination of international assistance, and reconciliation processes. To this end, the parties will interact with relevant experts and practitioners in these fields, as a basis for the formulation of approaches to the critical political issues for consideration in the future sessions of the peace talks.

The Sub-Committee on Political Matters will be chaired by the heads of delegations to the peace talks, Mr.

Anton Balasingham and Mr. G.L. Peiris. Other government representatives will include Mr. Rauf Hakeem, leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress.

The third session of talks will take place on 2 - 5 December 2002 in Oslo, Norway. The following sessions will be held on 6 - 9 January 2003, - 10 February 2003, and 18 - 21 March 2003."

Improving Security in Eastern Sri Lanka

Improving the security situation in the East was a key topic of discussion in the second round of peace talks between the Liberation Tigers (LTTE) and the Government of Sri Lanka which began on the 31 October in Thailand. "Mr. Hakeem and Mr. Karuna agreed to work together in the east to meet with local communities and address their specific concerns and aspirations, including matters relating to the occupation and cultivation of land," a release from the Norwegian Embassy in Thailand said.

The full text of the release headed "Agreed Measures to Improve the Security Situation in the East" is follows:

"The Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) initiated the second session of the peace talks in Thailand with an evaluation of the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement over the past eight months. In their determination to consolidate the ceasefire and advance the peace process, the parties agreed to a set of measures to improve the security situation, inter-ethnic cooperation and respect for human rights in the North and Eastern Provinces.

In this context, the parties emphasized in particular their commitment to accommodate the needs and aspirations of all three communities in the east - Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese. The parties set out specific measures to improve relations between the Muslim and Tamil communities.

The parties agreed to continuously monitor the implementation of each of the agreed measures and to report on progress at future sessions of the peace talks.

● In light of the principal challenges in implementing the Ceasefire Agreement at this stage, the parties agreed to re-

constitute the SLMM Local Monitoring Committees, established in accordance with paragraph 3.7 of the Ceasefire Agreement. To this end, the parties agreed to replace a number of their appointees to the Committees with senior representatives from both sides.

● The parties are pleased to note that the SLMM has established Points of Contact (POCs) in the north and east as sub-offices of the SLMM district offices, in order to improve access to SLMM for local communities. The parties agreed to request the SLMM to consider establishing additional sub-offices, particularly in Batticaloa and Ampara districts.

● The parties agreed to establish direct communications between the commanders of the LTTE and the GOSL Special Task Force in the east, in order to improve the security situation.

● The parties agreed to establish a process of regular consultations between LTTE leaders and Muslim political leaders.

● Mr. Hakeem and Mr. Karuna agreed to work together in the east to meet with local communities and address their specific concerns and aspirations, including matters relating to the occupation and cultivation of land. They will work in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding reached between the leader of the LTTE, Mr. Velupillai Pirapaharan, and the leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, Mr. Rauf Hakeem, on 13 April 2002. The parties further agreed to remove any impediments to the pursuit of traditional economic activities of the Tamil and Muslim communities, such as fishing, farming and trading.

● The parties took special note of the need to address fully and cater for the interests and concerns of the Sinhala community in the Eastern Province, in the context of the ongoing peace negotiations.

● The parties agreed to establish peace committees at the community level in order to facilitate the resolution of local problems, contribute to inter-ethnic communication and reconciliation, and promote respect for human rights. The committees may include local community leaders, such as religious, political, business and civil society leaders. The committees will include local LTTE and GOSL leaders." □

Bishop's Plea to PM and LTTE Leader on Human Rights

Pointing out that the critical issue of "human" rights was totally ignored in discussions during the first round of peace talks between the government and the LTTE, and stressing that the human rights issue cannot await the final outcome of talks, the Catholic Bishop of Mannar Rt. Rev. Dr. Rayappu had, in a letter sent by the Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and LTTE leader Velupillai Pirapaharan prior to the commencement of the second round of peace talks in Bangkok on 31 October, submitted certain proposals as the "essential pre-requisites".

The following is the full text of the Bishop's letter:

"Please permit me to air my deepest sentiments in a matter that is so crucial to our country. I am sending this same message also to the Leader of the Liberation Tigers Mr. Velupillai Prabhakaran with copies to Mr. S.P. Thamilselan. I, with my people wish to state that we are so greatly encouraged by the initiative of both the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to resolve the protracted ethnic conflict through a negotiated settlement. Our active support and cooperation as always are available in this pursuit. Our people, particularly those from the conflict areas and the country as a whole have suffered immensely for far too long as a result of this conflict. Although, there is a positive outcome from the first round of talks at Sattahip in Thailand, together with me the people in general, are nevertheless on the basis of available reports, disappointed that the most critical issue of 'human rights' was virtually ignored in the deliberations in the first round of talks. After all, the quality of life of the people must be the central objective of this endeavor. This cannot await a final solution which may take a long period. Towards this end, the following are essential minimum pre-requisites:

Essential Needs

- 1) Availability of at least a reasonable standard of food, clothing and shelter
- 2) Access at least to an acceptable standard of education, health, water, sanitation and other essential services
- 3) An environment conducive to the pursuit of an honest living through gainful employment

Although, much publicity is being already given to improvements in this respect, it is noted that in reality, it is still far from being adequate. We are encouraged that the proposed Joint Task Force and Joint Committee agreed to at Sattahip, will address these issues as well as matters pertaining to security and the return of internally displaced persons to their original places of residence. We are hopeful that this exercise will be carried out with transparency and accountability.

Priority of 'Human rights'

The availability of at least the minimum essential needs, although ensuring sustenance, will mean very little in the absence of 'human rights'. This will include the following in conformity with at least the **minimum international standards**:

- 1) Freedom of speech and assembly
- 2) Access to information without any hindrance

- 3) Freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention
- 4) Freedom from any form of physical abuse and torture
- 5) Right to a fair judicial process and system
- 6) Freedom from any form of duress
- 7) Freedom of movement within the entirety of the country
- 8) Right to security
- 9) Right to ownership of property

It must be emphasized, that the final solution should also be underpinned by a foundation based on tolerance, equity, pluralistic political participation, democracy, good governance and justice to all.

Proposals

- 1) To specifically address and take immediate decisions in respect of all aspects of 'human rights' as indicated above, at the forthcoming second round of peace talks in Thailand. The objective is to give immediate tangible relief to the people.
- 2) Both the 'essential' needs and issues of 'human rights' to be addressed and implemented in tandem.

Yours faithfully, Bishop of Mannar.

Copy to a) Professor G.L. Peiris, Leader Sri Lanka Delegation

b) Dr. Anton Balasingham. Leader LTTE Delegation.

c) His Excellency the Ambassador of Norway in Colombo.

On the Peace Process & General Amnesty

November 10 - The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka has stressed the danger of blanket amnesties which provide immunity from prosecution and accountability as these amnesties tend to leave the culture of violence within institutions, such as the military or the guerilla army, untouched and unquestioned.

The Peace Council stated that these amnesties could violate the right of victims to seek redress for the wrongs done to them, subvert the rule of law and promote public cynicism. These were issues that Sri Lankan society, in particular the opposition and civil society, needed to grapple with even as the government tried to consolidate the peace process with the LTTE. The NPC made this reference to the recent High Court judgment on the LTTE leader Prabhakaran over the Central Bank bombing, and the culpability of the LTTE leadership in it. "There are calls for both punishment on the one hand, and for amnesty on the other hand. During the course of the civil war, crimes, were committed by both sides. Any attempt to grant a sweeping or blanket amnesty for war crimes on the grounds that they were committed during a time of war is likely to have a negative impact on the peace building process. Both parties need to accept and acknowledge their responsibilities in committing war crimes and abuse of human rights before any agreement is reached on the grant of amnesty," a NPC release said.

Among the other areas of concern outlined by the NPC were that there was near unanimity, both locally and internationally, that the government - LTTE talks that have been taking place in Thailand have been going better than anticipated. "At the second meeting between the two sides in Thailand they prioritised issues and engaged in joint problem solving as partners rather than as enemies. Among the decisions taken by the government and LTTE at the second meeting, the setting up of three joint committees to deal with

economic, security and political issues would be of great importance. In particular, the appointment of a committee to work out the issues pertaining to a political solution was an unexpected breakthrough much ahead of schedule."

The news release said all these developments could be considered as indications that both parties were committed and trust each other in their search for a political solution.

"Despite these successes there are some areas of concern that need to be addressed. The ethnic conflict arose because a section of the people of Sri Lanka felt that they were deliberately excluded from the processes of decision making. While it is important that the government and LTTE should retain their ability to move forward in the peace process, the National Peace Council believes it is also important that the peace process accommodates other actors and stakeholders to transform it into a more inclusive one. Indeed the longer term sustainability of the peace process will critically hinge on the ability of the government and LTTE to mobilise and enlist the support of other

actors and stakeholders by accommodating them in the peace process in an appropriate manner.

"A second area of concern to the National Peace Council is the growing feeling of being left out that is being experienced by large sections of the people. It was the strong desire of the general population for peace that made it possible for the major political parties to campaign electorally on peace platforms. While this vast majority is satisfied with the cease-fire and would not wish to see its end, they are being left out of the process and relegated to being mere observers.

"There is a need for the government and LTTE to formulate their strategies in a manner that recognises the right of the people to participate in the peace process. In particular, economic peace dividends need to become more evident to the people in order to mobilise their sustained support for the peace process. The government and international donors need to keep this need of the people in mind to ensure the sustainability of the peace process," the release added.

Violence & Death in University

The Sri Jayawardenepura University was plunged into deeper crisis with the death of a student who had been brutally attacked in a row over ragging. Vice Chancellor E. Epitawatte said they had shut down the university because they did not want to leave room for the training of killers or for torture. Tertiary Education minister Kabeer Hasheem charged that weapons were being smuggled into Universities and some parties were trying to turn universities into political hotbeds. He said he believed the incidents were not spontaneous but were politically motivated and instigated by interested parties.

Samantha Vithanage, a third year student of the University's Management Faculty, died on 9 November after he was severely assaulted in a lecturer's room allegedly by a pro-ragging group who broke in while the lecturer was trying to settle a dispute over a ragging incident.

University Vice Chancellor Professor D. S. Epitawatte, who closed the campus to prevent further clashes, angrily said that, in the context of violence and crude ragging, he felt as if the university had become "a place of butchery". The Vice Chancellor describing the situation as "extremely critical said it had gone out of control and he had no option but to call in the police to restore order." He said that lecturers and students had seen student leaders leading the mob which attacked other students. "This is a well planned killing. Those who are identifying themselves as "Student Leaders" of the university are totally responsible for this killing," he said.

Many have blamed members of the JVP-controlled Inter University Students Federation (IUSF) to be responsible for the violence that has gripped this University. "What kind of political party is it whose so-called 'student leaders' are very inhumane, no justice and no rationality in their politics. They have proved it by this killing", the Vice Chancellor said

According to the National Hospital sources, another student of the same batch, Indika Aththanayake (23), who was

also badly beaten on the head is now treating at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) for his head injuries.

The student clashes flared up on after a group of students protested the ragging of freshers by another group of students. The director of Student Welfare had tried to negotiate a settlement between the two parties. But the anti-ragging students had allegedly been attacked by recently elected Student Council members when they came out from the room. It is also reported that the dead student Samantha had badly been beaten on the head with a computer monitor. His attackers had prevented him being taken to hospital for nearly an hour. Assistant Judicial Medical Officer Dr.H.P. Wijewardana, who conducted the autopsy on the orders of the Colombo Chief Magistrate put down the cause of death to sever skull and brain damage resulting from an attack with blunt weapons.

Fourteen undergraduates were arrested in connection with the death of Samantha. The arrests came amidst growing evidence pointing to a JVP hand in the incident where a group of students attempting to halt the ragging of freshers were set upon by a rival student group. Fourteen students were injured in the clash- two of them in a critical condition who are receiving treatment at the ICU of the National Hospital.

The grieving mother of Ovitigala Vithanage Samantha described her son as a person who would rush to the aid of the helpless even at the risk to his life. "He had no connection with any political party. He did not belong to any student union in the university. Samantha only wanted to ensure that the freshers were not ragged." She was hurt that certain newspapers had distorted facts claiming Samantha died as a result of clash between two rival student groups. "This was absolutely false. There wasn't a fight at all. It was my son and some other innocent boys who were set upon by an unruly mob. I have lost my precious son and I alone have to bear the pain," she said, tears streaming down her face.

Suranga Handapangoda, also a third year student of the Management Faculty blamed the JVP backed student union for the inhumane student slaughter. The JVP has tried to create the impression that there was outside involvement in the brutal assault, he said. "But I take the total responsibility about what I am saying - there were no outsiders involved. It was done by the brutes of the Inter University Student Federation or the student wing of the JVP."

Describing incident he said: "From the sequence of events it was very obvious that the whole incident was well planned and pre-arranged. The attackers locked and guarded all entrances to the university preventing outsiders from entering the campus. We were in middle of our lectures when we learnt that JVP activists were brutally assaulting a group of students who opposed ragging. The girls panicked and some of us had to escort them out of the university. After seeing them safely out of the premises we went to the scene of the

incident. About 75 of them were aggressively attacking a student or students. It was not clear who was being attacked as there was a swarm of attackers. We heard shouting and pleading as the attackers beat them severely with bed poles, computer monitors and blunt weapons. We were utterly helpless as there were not even 10 of us against a mob of about 75. Later on with the help of the academic staff and other staffers of the University we managed to get away from the mob."

Westborg on 'What's going on?'

November 13 - Norwegian Ambassador, Jon Westborg said that the ceasefire between the government and the LTTE was holding and the two sides were talking seriously despite uncertainties and two torpedoes during the second session of peace talks in Thailand.

The Norwegian Ambassador addressing a Colombo Club luncheon on the topic "What's going on?" on 12 November said the High Court judgment delivered sentencing the LTTE leader to 200 years imprisonment on the day the second session of the talks began was the first torpedo.

"There were two torpedoes at the last meeting and the High Court decision was not necessarily easy to be handled by the LTTE," Mr. Westborg said while noting that the very next day six LTTE cadres were taken into custody by the Sri Lankan government authorities in possession of claymore mines.

He said another grave danger to the peace process was the establishment of LTTE police stations in the northeast "It can easily de-rail the situation," the ambassador said adding that it also poses a situation which is "extremely difficult for the government." This was likely to be a key topic of discussions between the government and the LTTE to reduce tensions in the East. "If the government wanted, it could have decided to walk out," Mr. Westborg said adding that instead the government decided to talk about it and deal with it.

"It is worthwhile remembering that we are in a ceasefire and not a peace treaty. The important fact is that the ceasefire is holding and it's actually working and the parties are keeping their guns down," the ambassador said.

Refuting charges that the facilitators were instrumental

in putting forward proposals for the two parties, the ambassador who is playing a key role in the talks said, the government and LTTE were themselves formulating the issues.

"Sri Lankans can solve this problem," he said adding that Norway's role was in facilitating the process. Although 'many' say that Norway has set down its own clauses, Norway is only assisting the process. "We are sticking to the mandate," he said. Discussing the problem and finding a solution has been left to Sri Lankans and this is how the process is progressing, he added.

He said that the committees being set up by the two parties have given an opportunity to both parties to sit together and formulate solutions. He added that the parties have agreed to set up a committee to look into issues of governance which will include law enforcement. "The problem can only be solved by Sri Lankans. There have been ample examples in the past that show that someone else cannot solve their problem."


He said that the Prime Minister was 'most certainly' involved in the discussion on the peace process. "We did not lead without his direct role," he added.

He said that the fact that "the cease-fire is holding" was positive. "The parties are keeping their guns down, people are not being killed, there is no attack on the Sri Lankan airport." Mr. Westborg added that as a result of the ceasefire the number of tourists to Sri Lanka had increased and the Norwegian embassy is receiving inquiries about investment possibilities here.

"The two sides are talking and not glossing over issues," he said pointing out that the setting up of three sub-committees for political, economic and military matters showed of intensive and extensive the talks were.

While paying a tribute to Sri Lanka's business community for the role it was playing in sustaining the peace process the ambassador said that the most important role must be played by the people of Sri Lanka.

"This problem can only be solved by Sri Lankans. We will assist to the extent it is required," the ambassador said.

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'Tigers to Join Democratic Mainstream'

- Anton Balasingham

The key decisions taken and the announcement that the Tamil Tigers are to join the democratic political mainstream, and the LTTE is to transform itself into a political organization have been described as major developments in the ongoing peace process in Sri Lanka. So much so Erik Solheim, Oslo's special envoy in Norway's facilitatory role in the peace process said, "The Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam achieved a major breakthrough in the second round of their negotiations in Thailand."

After four days of talks between the government and the LTTE, the parties arrived at three important decisions relating to the basic structure to start de-escalation of the conflict, an agreement to look at the political models available and a joint effort to seek international assistance to rebuild the north-east. Observers felt that the three key decisions, which, if implemented as earnestly as they were agreed upon, could change the course of Sri Lanka's history.

The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leader, Rauf Hakeem, reaching an agreement with the LTTE on the sensitive question of the security and interests of the Muslims in the eastern province was another important aspect of the talks.

On the last day of the talks the LTTE's chief negotiator Anton Balasingham told the media that the Tamil Tigers desired to join the democratic process. "It is the ultimate aim of the Tigers to join the democratic mainstream. No one should have any doubt about it," he told a press conference, which he addressed along with the head of the Sri Lankan government delegation, G L Peiris.

"If we are committed to entering the democratic mainstream, we will have to accept and assimilate other groups. We will definitely allow other political groups and parties to participate in the democratic process in the north and east," Balasingham continued.

Balasingham said that the Tigers were not operating on the concept of a separate state and spelt out "substantial regional autonomy and self-govern-

ance" as the political basis for a solution. Balasingham's commitment was endorsed immediately by Peiris, who said: "The LTTE taking part in a media briefing like this indicates more than any words would do that they are engaged in a transformation into a political organisation. They are coming to grips with the political realities and complexities. The best example of that is what is happening in this very room."

While what was happening and being said at Bangkok, and the plush garden setting, with the negotiating hall nesting on the edge of an artificial lake provided the right ambience for peacemaking, back home in Sri Lanka, the situation was far from encouraging. In Colombo, clashes between Sinhalese and Muslims, which led to a curfew in parts of the city brought into focus the fractious nature of ethnic relations in the island. A day later, the conviction and sentence of a 200-year jail term imposed on the LTTE leader, Vellupillai Pirabakaran, by the Colombo High Court for his part in the suicide bomb attack on the island's Central Bank complex killing 76 persons and injuring over 1300 others received wide publicity. And a day before the talks ended, news came of seizure by the Sri Lankan Navy six Tamil Tigers with a boat-load of weapons off the eastern shores of Sri Lanka.

Reacting to the Court sentence imposed on the LTTE leader, S. P. Tamilchelvan in-charge of the political wing of the LTTE said the decision of the court to impose a sentence of 200 years imprisonment on Prabakaran at a time when peace efforts are being pursued satisfactorily has caused sorrow, resentment and shock and expressed the fear that the peace efforts may be jeopardized. He also raised his strong opposition to the court verdict to the delegation of the Sri Lankan Government taking part in the negotiations at Thailand. He added that if the Government considers offences committed during the period of war then the LTTE would also be forced to act in the same manner. The LTTE would be forced to take legal action in its homeland for offences during the war. If such a thing happens

the LTTE's courts would be compelled to impose imprisonment not for 200 years, but for 2000 years for some past leaders of the Sri Lankan Government.

G. L. Peiris, Head of the Sri Lankan delegation replying to the objections of the LTTE explained that the verdict was of the court and not the verdict of the Government. He emphasised that there is no connection between the verdict of the court and the Government. However, Anton Balasingham, refused to accept the explanation by G. L. Peiris. He even queried as to how they could sit at the same table and carry on negotiations for peace when their leader is being declared a convicted criminal.

LTTE's chief negotiator at the peace talks Anton Balasingham reacted sharply to the judgment saying that it was "absurd and ridiculous". Balasingham said that when the matter was raised with the government delegation taking part in the talks he was told that the government had nothing to do about the matter as it was a court decision. "However, the court is a part of the government and they could have avoided this situation. The Sri Lankan government has also committed a number of crimes in the past," he said.

"I think it is a ridiculous judgment when both parties are engaged in a peace process. The passing of a 200-year sentence itself is an utter absurdity. "As far as we are concerned there have been incidents in the past which we consider as acts of war in the totality of the armed struggle against the state. Similarly the Sri Lankan government has also committed acts of violence and that can also be characterised as war crimes," Balasingham added. "We are hurt deeply, disappointed about the judgment at this juncture, which might undermine the spirit of the peace process," he said, quickly adding that it would not affect the peace process, "though the spirit of the process would be affected".

Remarkably these adverse developments appeared to result in little impact on the progress made in the second round of talks.

The talks were symbolically concluded with a tree-planting ceremony - the heads of the two delegations, Peiris and Balasingham, planted a cannon ball tree outside the Glass House, the hall where the negotiations were held for four days. The tree, called sal in Lanka, is of great religious significance as it is linked to the birth of the Buddha.

The government delegation comprised ministers Professor G.L. Peiris, Milinda Moragoda and Rauff Hakeem. The LTTE delegation consisted of Mr. Anton Balasingham, Mrs. Adele Balasingham, Mr. S. P. Thamilchelvan, Col. Karuna, Mr. V. Rudrakumar and J. Maheswaran.

The seriousness with which the LTTE approached the talks was reflected in the composition of its delegation. During the first round in last October, its delegation was composed of entirely "outsiders" meaning Tamils who lived abroad. This time around, the presence of its political wing leader, S.P. Thamilchelvan, and its eastern military commander, Karuna, made a visible statement. These two leaders replaced Jay Maheswaran and V. Rudrakumar who were in the team to discuss development and rehabilitation issues. That apart, the Tigers had faced some criticism that both Maheswaran and Rudrakumar were from the overseas Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora and not from the Wanni, a point conceded by Balasingham when he told journalists, "There was criticism that they were outsiders".

The LTTE which had insisted, before and during the first round that talks should first centre around the setting of an "Interim Council" to administer the war-torn northeast would appear to have become more flexible on the issue. The government was confronted with considerable opposition at home to the setting up of such a Council which its detractors said would aid the LTTE in institutionalising its grip on the northeast. The other difficulty faced by the government was that the country's Constitution would not permit such a body to be set up. And any attempt by the government to concede the LTTE demand by forming an Interim Council extra-constitutionally would have provoked legal challenges in the Courts. Recognising this problem, the LTTE would appear to have dropped its demand this time round.

The outcomes from the second round can be described as quite significant. A joint statement at the end of the talks said that the two sides had taken "significant steps" that touched upon the three limbs of the conflict - civilian rehabilitation, military concerns and political matters. Three committees are to be formed after the current round of talks.

The first committee was a follow-

up on the first round's decision to set up a Joint Task Force (JTF) to address issues of the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the northeast and resettlement of internally displaced persons in those areas. Differences of opinion between the government and the Tigers on details such as to whom this task force would be accountable were sorted out. The committee would take the name of a Sub-Committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs in the North and East. Its role will be to identify humanitarian and rehabilitation needs, prioritise implementation of activities to meet these needs, decide on the allocation of the financial resources for such activities and determine implementing agencies for each of such activities.

This eight-member sub-committee would have four members each from the LTTE and the government. Thamilchelvan and the secretary-general of the Government's Peace Secretariat, Bernard Goonetilleke, will be the leading members of this panel, which will report to the negotiators. Commencing a long process of de-escalation, the two sides agreed to set up the sub-committee as a mechanism for "a structured dialogue". This will include high-level civilian and military personnel on both sides, including Defence Secretary Austin Fernando and Col. Karuna of the LTTE.

That the government should commence without delay negotiations with the LTTE on the "core political issues" of the conflict in Sri Lanka was a constant refrain within the island, and the main person who articulated this point of view publicly on several occasions was President Chadrika Kumratunga. On this point too, the government and LTTE delegations agreed on setting up a "Sub-Committee on Political Matters". To be chaired by Peiris and Balasingham, this body will "jointly and separately address in depth, at the current stage of the peace process, relevant subjects such as other peace processes, political solutions to ethnic conflicts, models and systems of government, issues of post-conflict transition, co-ordination of international assistance and reconciliation processes". This committee, which will include the leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, Rauff Hakeem, will interact with relevant experts and practitioners to formulate approaches to the critical political issues for consideration in future

sessions of the peace talks. The leader of the Govt. delegation, Minister G. L. Peiris, has described this Committee "as a mechanism to address the political matters on the basis of which a negotiated settlement will be arrived at." When asked about the political model they had in view Anton Balasingham had said that "they would be looking at models of government based on internal self-determination, particularly federal and confederal models."

The Tigers and the Government also agreed upon a 19-member panel, comprising top military commanders from both sides and a Norwegian representative, to discuss the sensitive issue of relocating high security zones (HSZ) in the northeast. The first meeting of this committee is to be held on November 10, in no-man's land, Omanthai, 265 km north of Colombo.

"It is the ultimate aim of the Tigers to join the democratic mainstream. No one should have any doubt about it," Mr. Balasingham told a press conference after the conclusion of the 4-day talks, which he addressed along with the head of Colombo's delegation, G.L. Peiris, and the Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister, Vidar Helgessen.

"If we are committed to enter the democratic mainstream, we will have to accept and assimilate with other groups. We will definitely allow other political groups and parties to participate in the democratic process in the North and the East," Mr. Balasingham said to a question on whether the Tigers would permit other Tamil parties to participate in elections. On the organisation's move towards entering the political mainstream, he said, "a process of political democratisation" was on in the North-East. "The LTTE cadres go into Army-controlled areas and have set up offices and are carrying out political work in the North-East," he said.

Prof. Peiris welcomed the announcement by Mr. Balasingham and said "the LTTE taking part in a media briefing like this indicates more than any words would do that they are engaged in a transformation into a political organisation. They are getting to grips with the political realities, complexities. The best example of that is what is happening in this very room."

Balasingham also said he was looking forward to meeting Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe at the November 25 donor conference in Oslo where he (Balasingham) would be highlight-

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ing humanitarian issues in the North.

Asked whether the LTTE had dropped its demand for the setting up of an interim administration, Balasingham said, "We may or may not go for an interim administration. What is important is a solution that would immediately address the humanitarian issues in the North."

Mr. Helgessen expressed happiness that the peace process was progressing "remarkably well". There was a "determination by both parties to overcome difficulties," he said, adding that the talks were held in a "constructive" manner and its outcome had "exceeded expectations". "What we have agreed is here on paper. It has to be implemented vigorously on the ground."

The third round of talks between Colombo and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) will be held in the Norwegian capital, Oslo, between December 2 and 5. After the December round, the two sides would meet again between January 6 and 9, 2003. Meetings between February 7 and 10 and March 18 and 21 would follow this.

Human Rights Resource Person

The government and the LTTE

would appear to have positively responded to the pressure both internationally and within Sri Lanka urging the parties to address the human rights dimension in the ongoing peace process. Calls for human rights to be given greater prominence in the deliberations look set to receive a fillip with the participation of a senior international human rights official. Responding to reporters' questions, the chief negotiators of both sides announced that Mr. Ian Martin, who has considerable experience of human rights work in Rwanda, East Timor, Bosnia and Eritrea would join the talks in future.

Asked about calls for human rights experts to be involved in the talks, Mr. Anton Balasingham, chief negotiator of the Liberation Tigers said: "With regards allowing a human rights resource person in the political negotiations, we have decided to allow an expert [to join] as early as possible." "May be in the next session of talks we might invite an expert, one Mr. Ian Martin of Amnesty International. He has decided to help us. And definitely any framework we are going to agree will incorporate human rights norms," Mr. Balasingham

said.

The Sri Lankan government's chief negotiator, Prof. G. L. Peiris added: "The government of Sri Lanka has been very happy about the participation of Amnesty International. They wrote to us, we readily agreed to their request and the involvement of Mr. Ian Martin is a matter that we no problems with at all; in fact we are very enthusiastic and very happy about it." "Both the government and the LTTE have both subscribed to the principle with regards the application of human rights standards. So that is not an issue," Mr. Peiris said further. "We both believe there is no conflict between the conflict resolution and human rights dimensions. If you have to solve a problem like this and the solution is to stand the test of time, obviously the solution has to be predicated on respect for and enforcement of human rights," he concluded.

Mr. Ian Martin is presently Vice President of the International Centre for Transnational Justice. He has some 30 years of experience in the field of human rights, both with nongovernmental organizations and as a representative of

(continued on next page)

19th Amendment, Peace Process and Economic Reform

Amrit Muttukumar

The nadir of the 10-month old UNF government was reached recently when it richly earned the ignominy of having its much vaunted 19th Amendment thrown out by the country's highest court. The coup de grace is the reported supreme court pronouncement that one of its clauses was unenactable since it was tantamount to the suspension of the Constitution.

The 18th Amendment too was rejected in its entirety. The 19th Amendment clumsily drafted by so-called legal experts holding key ministerial office including the minister of constitutional affairs, is a brazen attempt of political expediency to curb the President's power to dissolve parliament. This contention is supported by the conscience vote most reprehensibly applying only to this Amendment. In other words, the conscience of our honourable members of parliament (assuming they have one) will not be applicable in all other cases. If this is not naked opportunism, what is? The 18th Amendment which at the request of the Constitutional council (CC) attempts to

(Continued from page 11)

the United Nations.

He served as the Secretary General of Amnesty International from 1986 to 1992 and went on to play a central role in several international missions: Human Rights Director of the UN/OAS Mission to Haiti in 1993 and 1995, and served as Chief to the Human Rights Field Operation in Rwanda from 1995 to 1996;

Deputy High Representative for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1998 to 1999; Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Mission in East Timor in 1999; and from 2000 to 2001 Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary-General for the UN Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea.

give immunity to the CC, has very rightly been rejected. Such a step is clearly obnoxious since it violates a basic principle of good governance accountability and calls into question the bona fides of the CC members.

The country has already suffered enough due to the immunity given to the Executive President. In regard to the 19th Amendment, if the government was sincere in its purpose, why was the conscience vote not made applicable in all cases? Another unanswered question is why the government has not aggressively pursued the president's purported willingness to abolish the executive presidency in its entirety? Is it that the UNP is smacking its lips at the thought of assuming this position for itself? Is it not a fact that the entire governance process and the stability of the government itself has been greatly debilitated due to its own incompetence, arrogance and unprincipled conduct? This state of affairs unless effectively addressed will also impact negatively on the peace process and the required economic reforms.

In the meanwhile, very sadly, our so called leaders of civil society irrespective of their power base consisting mainly of the business and professional communities, the religious clergy as well as financially well endowed NGOs, are virtually fiddling while the country is on the brink of anarchy mainly as a result of poor governance—particularly the absence of accountability. The only mitigating feature is that due to fortuitous circumstances largely connected with the stoicism of our people, we have been on this brink for some time now without actually falling into the abyss. It is only a matter of time before this takes place. In any event, have we a collective death wish to stay on the brink? Staying on the brink of anarchy exerts a terrible price in terms of the continuing decay of the country's

social fabric and economy. The only temporary lifeline we have is the support of the international community for the peace process. Nevertheless, we have to recognise the limitations of this support and realise that in the absence of civil society being decisively activated through forceful action for the real benefit of the country, no progress is possible in any sphere be it the peace process, the economy or good governance in both the public and private sectors. The single major reason for the plight of this country is the absence of accountability be it in the government, public or private sectors. A fundamental question to be answered is why our leaders of civil society inclusive of supposedly independent and influential financially well endowed NGOs some of them even led by people with international clout have never convincingly demanded such accountability?

Peace Process

The much needed peace initiative which has to be collectively nurtured and shepherded to its logical conclusion is in imminent danger due to the fallout from the above malaise leading to political instability. Very clearly, this very complex and sensitive issue cannot be left exclusively in the hands of our largely unprincipled and incompetent political leaders.

Our leaders of civil society be they from the business, professional, religious or NGO sector, scrupulously avoid controversy and do not take a strong, specific public stand on any national issue other than exceptionally at best selectively in most general terms possibly not to upset political leaders either from the government or the government-in-waiting. While this is not surprising in the context of our largely servile private sector with its poor state of corporate governance and its running with the hare and hunting with the hound syndrome in pursuit of state patronage, it is inexplicable in respect of our financially well-heeled ostensibly independent large NGOs who are beneficiaries of substantial foreign funding and manned also by people of much potential influence.

In as much as the PA pursued its dubious war for peace with the apparent central objective of clinging on to political power, there is sufficient cause

for suspicion that the core objective of the UNP in pursuing the peace initiative is also primarily hinged on capturing and maintaining political power after correctly reading the mood of a people suffering from war fatigue. The added bonus for the government is the opportunity to tide over economic difficulties through the peace dividend to be derived from the expected foreign aid and investments. The changed ball game in the aftermath of 9/11 is a bonanza in this direction. It would seem that the peace process itself is being primarily driven thanks to the international community. These positive features are being squandered due to:

- Mismanagement by the government of the vital southern consensus mainly as a result of its own incompetence, arrogance and unprincipled conduct. This includes the Muslim dimension in the east of the country. This has the potential to undermine the massive goodwill it had immediately after assuming office. It is felt that this process has already commenced in earnest.

- Failure to dispassionately and honestly educate the people on hard realities- causes, implications and possible solutions of the crisis. This should be explained in terms of its impact both on the everyday life and the future of the people

The only education carried out both by the State and civil society organisations- mainly NGOs is largely for the general notion of peace. Of course everyone is for peace! No one has ever been against peace. The question is, are the people ready for what it will take to usher in real peace

which will include:

- Nature of the State: highly advanced federalism or even a confederation
- Unit of devolution: a united north-east
- Self-governance.

Substantial autonomy and devolution

Let alone the people, we are not certain as to whether there is consensus on this even within the ranks of the government itself. Even the leadership of the business, professional and religious community have never articulated this. Although, some sections of the NGO sector have considered some of these issues, it has merely been in a limited manner in restricted position papers and within the confines of the seminar circuit and that too often through foreign third parties. The mass market has always been assiduously avoided particularly in respect of specifics. We also do not see any concrete steps being taken to assure the people in the north east of the country that the final solution will also be underpinned by a foundation based on tolerance, equity, pluralistic political participation, democracy and good governance.

Economic Reform

When the government has clearly demonstrated its utter duplicity and incompetence to frame legislation, examples of which are the 18th and 19th Amendment Bills, which it has botched even when closely supervised by its much vaunted legal experts which includes its much hyped minister of constitutional affairs, how can any confidence be placed on the

reported hastily drafted bills such as the 36 Bills on the deregulation of the economy in favour of the private sector?

The entire deregulation and privatisation process which will fundamentally affect the quality of life and indeed the future of the country's present and future gen-

erations is being executed through hastily prepared legislation devoid of virtually any tangible public exposure and debate.

When the very survival of our people will be affected by some of these measures which include irreversible implications to the physical environment of the country, why has there been no white paper on any of these measures to give the people an opportunity to discuss them and their implications with a view to making their own proposals? The stipulated parliamentary procedure for enacting legislation which includes the three readings of a proposed Bill is also subverted similar to everything else in this country.

One suspects that the gathering opposition to deregulation and privatisation is essentially politically motivated since the record of the PA government was possibly even worse in this respect. Nevertheless, the largely mediocre privatisation advertising campaign being executed mostly by alleged UNP henchmen and the surreptitious nature of its introduction to parliament has played into the hands of the opposition. Here too, while the silence of our largely servile private sector who are the beneficiaries of this is understandable, the silence of some of the financially well-heeled NGOs ostensibly 'independent' also carrying out programmes purportedly on good governance, together with some leading chambers of commerce as well as of some much hyped individuals in the same game is deafening.

Conclusion

The vigilance and assertiveness of civil society is the lubricant that oils the wheels of a vibrant democracy. This is also a critical ingredient for sustainable development and progress. It is in the absence of this, that irresponsible governance and inequity thrives. This has so far been the tragedy of Sri Lanka.

Unless our so-called leaders of civil society get rid of their running with the hare and hunting with the hound syndrome, we see little hope for this bleeding nation. Surely, this country deserves better. Does it not? □

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Ceasefire: Space for National Self Examination

Nalin Swaris

"War will only end after a great labour has been performed in altering men's moral ideals directing them to the good of all mankind and not only of the separate nations into which men happen to be born"

- Bertrand Russel

Contrary to the consciously spread delusion, this country is still in a state of war. What the two negotiating parties seek to achieve is full or partial realisation of the political objective for which they went to war. The distinction between a political and military solution to the conflict between the GOSL and the LTTE is semantic. War too is a political solution, for "War", as Calusewitz defined it, "is an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will... War therefore is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument ...War is the means, and the means must always include the object in our conception of war". If the objectives of either side can be achieved without a return to war, the resumption of hostilities would be 'uneconomical', for however horrendous the tactics, strategically looked at, war is 'a rational instrument of policy'."

Political and Social Peace

The ceasefire has meant that killings have ceased and that the people who inhabit this Island, from South to North and from East are able to engage in social and commercial intercourse with each other. Step by step, the political contour of 'the final solution' is being drawn and put in place. A peace understood as merely the absence or the end of war is a negative peace. A political settlement of a politically created war, is a political peace, not a social peace. Michel Foucault has pointed out that the reverse logic of Clausewitz' assertion that war is continuation of politics by violent means implies, in the first place, that the relations of power that function [in a given] society rests upon a definite relationship of forces (conflict resolutionists apparently have no difficulty with this - NS) that it is established at a determinate, histori-

cally specifiable moment in war and by war". The NGO 'civil society' peace lobbyists cannot be unaware of Foucault's second contention: "If it is true that political power puts an end to war, that it installs, or tries to install, the reign of peace in civil society, this by no means implies that it suspends the effects of war or neutralises the disequilibrium revealed in the final battle". (Truth and Power)

Pax Britannica

After the British Conquest of Ceylon we had peace the Pax Britannica. And it is the disequilibrium established in war and through war. The effect of that peace is in great measure is the cause of this war. With regard to the signing of the Kandyan Convention, K.M. de Silva in The History of Ceylon (Vol 3.p. 26), observes: "The people took no part in this ceremony, and indeed the townspeople took not the slightest interest in the proceedings". This 'Memorandum of Understanding' was intended to ensure the rights of the Western aggressor and the religious and social elites of the time. If this country finally fell into British hands, it was due to factional strife between the feudal elites, political and religious, who for centuries had been exploiting their own people. The Convention was aimed at guaranteeing their survival and the perpetuation of their institutions and privileges. The British Peace also produced a new 'colonial class' who like the feudal elites, were equally divorced from the realities of the ordinary men and women of all ethnic groups of this island. It is to these thoroughly Anglicised gentleman and ladies that the British handed over control of political democracy. What we have is an imposed political system which, is democratic in form and utterly feudal in content. If

our country lost its independence due to factional strife between our feudal elites, our post independence society has been brought to the edge of self destruction due to factional strife between our political elites. It goes on even in the face of self annihilation.

The Pax Britannica also produced an intellectual class alienated from the ordinary vernacular speaking people, and who, apart from a few notable exceptions, were and continue to be, as Marx put it, "the thinkers of this class (its active conceptive ideologists), who make the perfecting of the illusions of the (dominant) class about itself, their chief source of livelihood..."

The social classes and intellectuals who perceive themselves as the losers and the excluded from this arena of privilege and have reacted to the dominant condition and ethos, have in general, been driven by what Nietzsche called resentment. Their criticism gets bogged down in negativity and fails to produce anything creative or liberating. Their creative energies are expended in resentment of the 'other'. Their unrestrained and threatening rhetoric, when it breaks out into actual violence becomes savage. Centuries of repressed resentment find catharsis in orgies of blood revenge.

This war is as much an outcome of institutionalised socio-economic oppression as the unleashing of psychic forces repressed by the reproduction from generation to generation of caste-class domination and division. If I may adapt the last sentence of Izeth Husain's perceptive article on Sinhalese Divisiveness (Island 11th November): On the Sinhala side, the challenge is how to liberate themselves from Sinhala politicians. On the Tamil side, the Vellalah Tamil political elites who started off by trying carve out an exclusive political borough for themselves, have ended up as the retainers of the 'boys' (and girls) they thought they could deploy for their elititarian ends. They have, in a final admission of their historical obsolescence nominated the LTTE as the "sole representative" of the Tamil people speaking people.

The ceasefire provides a space an opportunity, for moral stocktaking for concerned citizens especially, the enlightened intelligensia and particularly the religious leaders, to begin a broad national discussion about what went wrong with this nation, and how we,

like lemmings, slowly, almost imperceptibly were led into the abyss of war and self-destruction? To all but the blind it is clear that all our social and state institutions including our religious institutions are in a state of collapse. Our national culture has become a decadence culture in the Nietzschean sense, in that our social institutions have lost the capacity for self renewal. When a culture deadens the senses, even the need for liberation from its tyranny is not felt.

A young German friend told me that the high life in Colombo reminds him of what he had read about the decadence which had engulfed Berlin in the early thirties. Life had become unbearable for the socially weak due to mass unemployment, runaway inflation, spiralling cost of living. The middle classes continued to live their cosy lives as best they could within their limited life-horizons, the churches carried on as usual, oblivious of the impending crisis and when the fascists took over, the churches were mostly on the wrong side. Meanwhile the super rich, many of them, new rich, with wealth acquired from racketeering, gave themselves up to endless rounds of pleasure in Ber-

lin's nightclubs which catered to the most bizarre tastes of the carousers. Vulgarity had become high culture. There were signs of social collapse everywhere. The decadents could not care less.

During the years between the two world wars, the fledgeling German democracy, (an imported system), had neither the maturity nor the resilience to respond adequately to the grave socio-political crisis. As it worsened, demoralisation and the sense of hopelessness among the masses deepened. The time was ripe for a strongman to fill the moral and political vacuum. And he did. The eminent Dutch historian P.J. Bouwman recalls how he as a young man shared the gloom of many of his peers and yielded to the thought that perhaps a strong dictatorship might be a necessary evil to remedy this hopeless situation. "The actual turn of events", he writes, "in dictatorially ruled states, soon put an end to such illusions, among those who had eyes to see and ears to hear. Accompanied by much flag waving, fanfare and mass hysteria the way was opened for a fiercely amoral politics of violence". (From Renaissance to World War 11

and ten, twisting and rocking till past midnight. Same music. Same artistes.

Same boring excitement

Long before a ceasefire became operational, Sasanka Perera pondered on the phenomenon of merry makers who rush from Colombo to Trincomalee for the weekends to 'hang out' and 'have fun'. Nowadays the done thing is 'to do Jaffna'. If you haven't been there you are not 'with it'. These merry 'internal tourists' hardly see the devastated towns, the homes turned into mounds of rubble, the pain and anguish ravaged faces of war victims, the displaced on the way and back, the baffled faces of children who have never seen the luxury, open market toys of the rich boys - their state of the art vehicles. "Machang did Jaffna. Last weekend. Had a Pukka time, man. Drank palmyrah, enjoyed 'kool', put a sea bath and came. Saw a few Tigers also, man". The point is that the peacemakers or our religious leaders have not even begun to initiate discussion among and by the people about the human cost of war and to protest the unseemliness of the endless carousing that goes on and which is being offered as a peace dividend. I sometimes think that these revellings are encouraged as a deliberate stratagem on the part of the authorities, religious and political, to prevent any real reflection taking place about the ravages of war and the processes of real peace making. The misery of war has become raw material to be processed and packaged for a price. The milk of human kindness as a value added retail commodity.

Four Centuries Cultural and Social History of Europe - Dutch edition).

Life is a Cabaret, my friend

The ceasefire far from being treated as an interval for critical moral self examination, for sobriety and reflection is being promoted as a chance for dissipation on a grand scale, with the State as well as private commercial organisations vying with each other to provide nightly entertainments, pop and rock concerts on a nightly basis, live and on TV. Cameras zoom in on little boys and girls kids as young as nine

Sansanka Perera argued that the revellers in Colombo and from Colombo and the people in the war zone, inhabit two zones of reality in simultaneous time (The World According to Me (1999:29-38). The revellers obviously have no time to ponder about the reality of violence 'over there', because the habituées of Colombo's hot spots are turning them into glamorous battlefields.

The only protest against such vulgar and violent outbursts was issued because it is bad for tourism. Few found it perturbing that these decadents with their gun toting body guards belong to the so-called cream of society and are hailed as standard bearers of our growth economy This is decadence in its most degenerate form - not to recognize it when you see it. □

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BUDGET 2003 AND THE PEACE PROCESS

Dr. S. Narapalastngam

The realisation of various aims announced by the Finance Minister K.N. Choksy in his second Budget speech delivered on 6th November, depends on the progress seen in the ongoing peace process over the coming months. This is clear from his statement: "Our effort is to reform the economy in parallel with the peace process." Even the projected growth rate of about 5.5 per cent for 2003 is tied to the developments on the peace front. The report of the Central Bank released before the Budget stated that "the economic projections for 2003 are based on the assumption of progress in the ongoing peace process". It pointed out that "an early political solution to the north and east issue will increase growth prospects significantly, while any reversal in the peace process will have huge economic, political and social costs."

As in the case of the peace process, people have to wait for some time to see whether or not the proposed economic adjustments and reforms will deliver the expected results. These too require determined efforts over a period and more importantly on the ways the proposed measures are implemented. The Land Minister Dr. Rajitha Senaratne compared the government's approach with that taken to build a house. He said: "In the first budget we laid the foundation, in this budget we are building the walls. But water can still creep in. In the next budget, we will fix the roof, in the one after that we will install the windows and doors and in the final Budget of the UNF government we will plaster the House." The problem here is that the people may be willing to wait some time for a final political settlement to the ethnic conflict but in the case of day-to-day living conditions they expect improvements sooner than later. The high cost of living and low incomes endured by many during the past years as a result of the costly war and other wasteful spending by the authorities have com-

pelled even the employed persons to expect some relief early. The plight of the many who are unemployed because of the lack of opportunities resulting from low investment in the private sector and under utilisation of existing capacities in various industries is worse. The tourism industry has been hit badly by the war. When it comes to the basic needs of the people, the prospect of improvements in the future is not enough to mollify them. The latter does not depend simply on the proposed reform measures indicated in the Budget speech. The kind of uncertainty that exists in the case of the peace process prevails with regard to the outcome of the proposed reforms too.

These and the related arrangements include:

Establishing an independent Public Debt Management Office, which will report directly to the Minister of Finance. For this purpose, a comprehensive Public Debt Management Law is to be enacted.

Further progression of the tax reforms outlined in the previous budget speech.

Simplification of the Income Tax procedures.

Establishing a Road Fund financed from levies on vehicles and managed by a Roads Board, comprising representatives of the public and private sectors set up under a Road Fund Act.

Establishing a Sri Lanka Infrastructure and Corporate Restructuring Fund managed jointly by the State and the private sector to promote greater investment in infrastructure and to help restructure distressed companies.

Development of small and medium-scale industries including the fishing industry for which Rs.200 million will be allocated to the Rural Economy Resuscitation Fund. Five economic centres in addition to the two established in Meegoda and Embilipitiya will be established.

In order to finance tourism promotion activities by the Tourism Devel-

opment Council - a public-private partnership, the embarkation tax for international travel is increased from US Dollars 10 to 15 per passenger.

Creating a new Tea Sector Association with representatives from the Government and all stakeholders in the sector. This Association will take over the regulatory and market development functions hitherto managed by Government.

Creating a Agro-Enterprise Development Fund to provide assistance to small and medium-scale farmers to improve their agricultural practices, introduce new crops and maintain village tanks. The Fund will also assist to establish a hybrid seed industry and develop improved varieties of commercial crops through tissue culture.

Creating a Forum of the Sri Lanka Apparel Association as a private-public partnership to oversee the 2005 transition. A plan has been prepared to advance the industry and overcome the challenges posed by the phase-out of the Multi Fibre Association quotas.

Establishing a Gem and Jewellery Trade Promotion Council as an apex body to assist in the repositioning of the industry. The Council is expected to encourage existing banks to establish a gem-trading branch for specialised industry financing.

Reforming corporate governance to develop further the corporate bond market in Sri Lanka. An accredited rating agency will make credit rating of all deposit taking institutions and all varieties of debt instruments other than those issued by the Government. This will enable the public to assess the risks involved in their investments.

No one can expect these changes to alleviate the financial and economic hardships of the masses in the short term. The mere establishment of new councils or committees will not solve difficult problems. Many committees set up in the past have not helped to address the problems that hindered progress not because they have not worked hard but due to the reluctance of political leaders to act on their recommendations. The fate of Tissa Devendra Salaries Commission Report illustrates this point. The Finance Minister himself has referred to it in his Budget speech. Referring to the recommendation that a thirty percent reduction in

the cadre of public officers, particularly in the middle and lower levels be made over a five year period, the Minister said: "the practicality of the recommendation is doubtful." This is because of the high unemployment that will result from such a drastic lay-off.

The Finance Minister quite rightly said that the present debt crisis is the result of extravagant spending by governments without regard to the consequences. The borrowed funds were not used to increase growth and create employment opportunities in the productive sectors of the economy. Public funds were used to expand the government needlessly. This was done for the personal benefit of the elected members of the government and not to improve the administration. The national debt in 2001 amounted to Rs. 1450 billion. It is now equal to 105 per cent of Sri Lanka's Gross Domestic Product. This also meant that "every man, woman and child in Sri Lanka carried in his or her shoulder a liability of Rs. 77,500, being the pro-rata share of the country's debt burden". The interest payments alone in the current year amount to Rs. 118 billion. The repayments of capital in the same year amount to Rs. 168 billion, of which Rs. 38 billion is in respect of foreign debt and Rs. 130 billion due on domestic debt. The severity of the debt problem can be seen from the fact that while the total debt service payments is Rs. 286 billion, the total government revenue is only Rs. 262 billion! Despite the high borrowings by the State, the living conditions of millions of citizens either deteriorated or at best remained unchanged in recent years. The national debt statistics do not bother the ordinary citizens. Their immediate concern is the high cost of living.

The Finance Minister has proposed action on two fronts to overcome the debt crisis. First is to reduce the budget deficit that is estimated to be around 9 per cent of the GDP this year. The proposed reduction is expected to bring the ratio down to 7.5 per cent in 2003. In the recent past, the actual deficit has been considerably higher than the target set in the budget. If this year's budget deficit turns out to be higher than the 9 per cent estimate, this will be

consistent with the usual pattern. The high deficit is in part due to high interest payments and the inability to reduce expenditures in major items. Salaries and pension payments that make up sizeable part of the total recurrent expenditures cannot be reduced. Despite the cease-fire agreement, there has been no significant reduction in the allocations to the defence ministry. In fact, the Government is trying to recruit more persons to the military. The need to reach a permanent settlement to the N-E conflict sooner than later is also apparent from the imperative to reduce the budget deficit. The second measure proposed is to sell under-utilised state-owned commercial assets. Privatisation is considered not as a means to improve efficiency but as a way of raising money to reduce the public debt. The revenue expected from privatisation as given in the budget estimates is Rs. 13.5 billion. The indiscriminate sale of important assets entails the risk of creating new problems that will impinge on the well being of the masses. Already the gap between the rich and the poor has widened as a result of the various policies that curtailed welfare expenditures without effective compensatory measures to alleviate poverty.

Privatisation is not a panacea for the economic and social problems in low-income countries, where the majority of the population are struggling to live within their meagre incomes. This does not mean that privatisation has to be rejected completely. It needs to be handled with care. Even the developed countries that privatised public utilities and some essential services have realised that the consumers have not gained and in many instances quality of the services declined, while the companies put up the fares/ prices. Driven by the urge to maximise profits, there was no proper maintenance of fixed assets and safety was compromised. The executives received fat salaries and bonuses. Privatisation of the rail system in Britain is a good example. Any train traveller in Britain will tell the kind of services they get since privatisation. In California the privatised electricity system ran into serious difficulties despite the higher prices charged by the companies. In the end, the government had to help the companies to stay in business.

The sale of gas, electricity, water and ambulance service in the state of Victoria in Australia failed to provide satisfactory services at reasonable prices. In Sri Lanka even with some state control, ownership change will not necessarily be beneficial to the society, particularly when the same weaknesses in the government that led to corruption and cronyism remain and which in turn contributed to inefficiency and financial losses in the state enterprises. There are allegations that even in the sale of state assets by Sri Lankan governments, vested interests have influenced the decisions. The state did not get the full value of the assets. The urgent need for funds should not compel the government to ignore its social obligations and the future welfare of the people and the country. What is needed in Sri Lanka is a massive culture change and not tinkering on the surface that will not remove the root causes of the country's political, economic and social ills.

The Finance Minister has lamented in his speech that the trading sector has not passed the benefits of the tax reductions made last year by the Government to the consumer. The government had to forgo some revenue as a result of the changes. He was referring to the abolishment of the National Security Levy (NSL) and the loss recovery charge on fuel as well as the replacement of the Good and Services Tax (GST) by the Value Added Tax (VAT). No one will accept that the VAT was preferred to the GST in order to reduce the indirect taxes paid by consumers. Private businesses operate all over the world with the objective of maximising their profits. If their costs are rising, then they will find every single opportunity available to offset the increase. Private businesses do not operate for the common good; their objective is to make money. The Minister said with the aim of containing the cost of living, "we reduced the customs duty surcharge from 40 percent to 20 percent; stamp duty on commercial documents was abolished; interest rates reduced; the income tax surcharge of 20 percent was removed; and corporate taxation was reduced to 20 percent for companies with a taxable income of less than Rs. 5 million." But the masses have not benefited from these measures

too. The beneficiaries were the big businesses, moneyed persons and their families. The economic growth in 2001 was negative 1.4 percent and for the current year positive 3 percent growth is the latest estimate. But this change has had no impact on the cost of living for ordinary citizens or on the incomes of the vast majority of the population. These macro-economic statistics do not reveal the actual living conditions of different sections of the population.

The rate of inflation is expected to decline in 2003 to 8.7 percent from this year's estimate of 9.6 percent. The cost of living has already risen because of price increases announced before the budget. The VAT base has been widened and from 1st January 2003 Banks and other financial sector institutions will be subject to VAT at 10 percent. The whole sale and retail sectors will be subject to VAT from 1st July 2003. Items currently exempt from import duties will be subject to duties varying from 2% to 10%. Only a few items including wheat and crude oil will remain exempted. The existing customs duty

surcharge will remain at 20 percent. These costs will definitely be passed on the consumers and it is difficult to see how any reduction in the cost of living can come, unless the prices of imported goods decline in the world market. After the cease-fire agreement, the people in the North are paying two separate taxes, one levied by the Government and the other by the LTTE. The value of the Sri Lankan Rupee has declined sharply in recent years. According to the forecast in the Budget, the US Dollar in 2003 will be worth Rs. 99.38 as compared with Rs. 95.38 this year. The Rupee value of imports will increase and this will have some effect on the retail prices of imported goods unless their prices in dollars decline.

The desperate move to raise revenue to finance Government's high current expenditure is seen from the proposed changes in Concessions and Exemptions under the Inland Revenue Act listed in Annex 2. Attention is drawn here to the 15% tax to be levied on foreign exchange remittances by individuals sent to a bank in Sri Lanka. In view

of the clarification provided by the Minister in response to widespread opposition to this proposal, the relevant item in Annex 2 is reproduced here. It states: "Any foreign exchange remittances by an individual which represents net earnings abroad to be taxed at 15% if remitted to a bank in Sri Lanka." Given that there are many unauthorised persons and organisations engaged in transferring money to and from abroad, the proposal encourages individuals to avoid the banks and patronise the unauthorised dealers. Another budget proposal that is likely to hinder the legitimate banking services is the change to the debit tax, which will be applicable to all accounts with effect from 1st January 2003. The rate remains at 0.1%, which is applicable to withdrawals over Rs. 20,000/- per month. Businesses will definitely pass on this tax to the customers. The net gain to revenue from this change is estimated to be Rs.1.6 billion. There is the risk that this tax will discourage customers to deposit large sums of money in banks.

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families in Sri Lanka survive on foreign remittances of migrant workers, the majority of them work as housemaids in the Middle East. They have been able to withstand the high cost of living because of incomes remitted by family members employed abroad. These are not included in the gross domestic product (GDP) because the incomes accrue from activities performed abroad for the benefit of the host countries. But the remittances help to finance imports and to meet other foreign exchange payment obligations. If the foreign money does not flow through the banking system, it will not be available to the government to the full extent as in the past several years. This has been a major source of foreign exchange earnings for the past several years. Many Tamil families in Sri Lanka too depend on foreign money for meeting their day to day expenses. There are no estimates of the amounts remitted through the banks in Sri Lanka.

Although, the government claims that the budget for 2003 will spur economic growth, the funds allocated for development do not tie up with this claim. The total expenditure for 2003 is estimated to be Rs. 438 billion of which recurrent expenditure is Rs. 343 billion or 19.3 percent of GDP. The capital expenditure amounting to Rs. 95 billion is only 5.3 percent of GDP. Since this includes funds for restructuring (Rs. 5 billion) and debt repayments (foreign loans repayment alone is Rs. 35.3 billion) only small amount will be available for public investment. The Minister's statement reproduced below tells the importance of the ongoing peace process to the mobilisation of foreign assistance needed to finance development programmes and projects. The presence of LTTE's chief negotiator at the Oslo meeting scheduled for November 25 is intended to affirm LTTE's commitment to peace and development. It will also indicate to the aid donors that the planned rehabilitation work in the North-East is a joint effort of the Government and the LTTE. Even those countries that have proscribed the LTTE as a terrorist organisation appear to recognise its importance at the present time.

The Minister said: "The support we hope to receive from our development partners in Oslo and Tokyo will enable us to embark upon a number of new projects which will create productive employment opportunities in many areas of the country. The main purpose of the Oslo meeting is to obtain additional support in 2003 for our peace dividend in the form of emergency relief for re-settlement and infrastructure development in the North and East. These funds are not included in the Budget as the precise amount is yet to be determined. Once finalised, they will be provided through supplementary estimate. The main purpose of the subsequent meeting in Tokyo is to discuss medium-term assistance for the core countrywide programmes outlined in this Budget." - Ref. Enhancing Job Creation, Budget speech.

If rapid economic development is the overall objective, the need to discuss the "core issues" in order to move faster towards a political settlement is clear. Moreover, without significant progress in the ongoing peace talks the donor community will not be convinced that an early political settlement is imminent. If they are not satisfied with the progress, the funds for development will not be forthcoming. The success of the Tokyo meeting too hinges on significant progress being made in the ongoing peace talks during the interim period. Japan's special envoy to Sri Lanka, Yushi Akashi (former UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs) said on November 8 at a pe-

ss briefing in Colombo, "rehabilitation and reconstruction cannot be separated from the political process of peace and I do not think donor countries will be prepared to commit large sums of money if there is some lapse in the peace process." It is relevant to mention here that the decision to set up a sub-committee on political matters to consider the "core issues" was taken at the second session of peace talks held during November 1-3 at the Rose Garden Resort in Nakom Pathom province in Thailand. This committee will be chaired jointly by the two heads of the negotiating teams. It was also decided to set up two other committees, one to examine rehabilitation needs in war-hit areas in the North-East and the other to shove military de-escalation. Aply, the veteran journalist Ajith Samaranayake has described Budget 2003 as "at best an interim budget intended to tide over the present situation." The outcome of the Tokyo meeting will determine whether or not the budget will lay the foundation for national development and economic growth. □

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Sinhalese divisiveness and the ethnic problem

Izeth Hussain

"People always clutch at straws, nobody wants to part with his illusions, and it is very difficult to look life in the face. To see things, as they are demands a superhuman effort."

- Nadezhda Mandelstam.

We have evidently reached a decisive stage in the evolution of our ethnic problem. It can lead to a final solution of the problem, or it can lead to the final break-up of Sri Lanka. Whether the outcome will be a solution or a break-up depends on whether or not certain conditions can be met, and that depends on whether or not a certain pre-condition can be established.

The pre-condition in question is Sinhalese unity. By that is meant not a total unity, to which no human group which has advanced to the stage of having a division of labour can ever aspire, but only a relative degree of unity.

It is the contention of this writer that the basic determinant of our ethnic problem has been Sinhalese divisiveness. Certainly it can be argued with some degree of cogency that there have been other contributory causes as well, such as for instance the fact that the Tamils have conceived of themselves as not just another minority but a national minority with a claim to a traditional homeland. Such causes have to be regarded as proximate ones, whereas Sinhalese divisiveness has to be seen as the basic determinant of our ethnic problem.

The argument in this article implies a shift of focus in approaching the ethnic problem from the Tamil minority and ethnic relations to the majority ethnic group, the Sinhalese. The focus is not on the national aspirations of the Tamils, on their allegedly being a minority with a majority complex, on LTTE terrorism, on supposed Indian interference in the past, on the failure of the international community to curb terrorism, all of which are familiarly invoked as causes of the ethnic problem. The focus is on a characteristic of

the Sinhalese, their divisiveness.

The shift proposed here was paralleled in Western studies of racism several decades ago. The shift there is supposed to have come about with Gunnar Myrdal's path-breaking book of 1944, an American Dilemma. After studying the race problem in the US for some time, Myrdal found that he could not reach any conclusions that seemed scientifically valid by focussing on the American blacks but could do so by focussing on the prejudices and behaviour of the American whites. There followed at the end of the Second World War the famous study by T. W. Adorno and other scholars of the "authoritarian personality" as providing the best explanation for Nazi anti-Semitism, and around the same time there appeared Jean-Paul Sartre's Reflections on the Jewish Question which similarly focussed on the prejudices and behaviour of the dominant race, and not, on the Jews, to explain anti-Semitism. Since then Western studies of race problem have focussed, for the most part. On the racist actors and not on the victims of racism or on race relations.

In Sri Lanka perhaps because of Western influence, the focus during the 'fifties and for some time afterwards was on "Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism" as providing the explanation for our ethnic problem. It was a simplification of an enormously complex problem. How inadequate it is as an explanatory model is suggested by the appalling poor electoral performance of the Sinhala Urumaya, particularly in the rural areas which are supposedly the strongholds of Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism. In any case, the focus shifted elsewhere and after 1977 got increasingly fixated on the notion that our ethnic problem is the consequence of

LTTE terrorism, and nothing else. The focus therefore is not on the majority ethnic group, but on the Tamil minority.

The focus on LTTE terrorism, which became an almost exclusive one after 1983, has very probably led to a weakened grasp of reality, like all indulgence in nonsense, and has contributed in no small measure to our colossal failures in handling the ethnic problem. This argues the need for an adequate explanatory model to enable us to understand our ethnic problem. The principle involved here is that to solve a problem we must first understand it.

It seems to this writer that the best possible model to explain Sri Lanka's ethnic problem, as well as all the other ethnic problems in the world including those in the West which are called "race problems", has to be in terms of what is called "modernity". In the typical pre-modern order of society, inter-ethnic rivalry and conflict had nothing like the salience they have now. Certainly there were group prejudices towards the other, but for the most part ethnic groups lived amicably enough with other ethnic groups on the basis of an ethnic division of labour, with ethnic groups specialising in one or more fields of economic activity, and accepting a segmented or hierarchical ordering of society.

The most important feature of modernity in relation to ethnicity is the idea of the nation state, according to which the majority ethnic group are the bhumiputras with a special relationship to the soil. It is an idea which automatically privileges the majority at the expense of the minorities, understandably setting off a drive towards unequal treatment which can range all the way from mild discrimination to genocide. Alternatively there can of course be fair and equal treatment of minorities, of which there are many examples in the contemporary world.

The idea of the nation state, rubbish though it is, would not have been half as pernicious as it has proved to be is not for much else that goes with modernity. One is mass education which is seen as necessary, among other things, for the ideological binding together of the nation; another is the priority given to economic development; and yet another is the right to upward

socio-economic mobility for all individuals irrespective of their ethnic and other group affiliations. Apart from those features of modernity, there is an ideology which gives a central importance to equality. It should not be difficult to see how in a world of scarce economic resources this mix of modernity can easily lead to rivalry and conflict between ethnic groups, and attempts by majorities to grab as much as possible at the expense of minorities.

The above are no more than just a few jottings about a model which to be made fully convincing has to be elaborated at much greater length. It is a model in which the focus is on the majority ethnic group, and those few jottings should suffice to suggest strongly that it could be seriously misleading to focus on what is done by a minority, in this case LTTE terrorism, while ignoring what is done and not done by the majority.

In any case, it is time to shift the focus on to Sinhalese divisiveness as the basic determinant of our ethnic problem. But a clarification is required before we proceed further. As this article is being written by a minority member, a Muslim, it might be thought that in shifting the focus away from the Tamils and on to the Sinhalese he is really engaging in what has come to be called "Sinhala bashing".

That cannot be, because the main inspiration for this article has come from a statement made by a Sinhalese who was regarded as the exemplary Sinhala Buddhist chauvinist of his time, and his statement was made to what was regarded as the exemplary Sinhala Buddhist chauvinist institution of that time, namely the Sinhala Maha Sabha. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike made the following statement in February 1945: "We felt that the true and wise course to adopt was this: first to try and unite the Sinhalese, and then to try and win the confidence of other Ceylonese communities, and, with the co-operation of all progressive parties in the country, to put up a united front against reactionaries at home and imperialism and exploitation on the part of the non-Ceylonese."

Bandaranaike clarified that what he meant by Sinhalese unity was the coming together across the divisions of caste, religion, and Kandyan and low-

country Sinhalese, and he went on to refer to those who had mistakenly held that "no Particular effort to unite the Sinhalese was necessary."

Unfortunately he did not clarify in that statement, or anywhere else as far as this writer is aware, what exactly he meant when he said that it was necessary "first to try and unite the Sinhalese". He evidently had more in mind than just a priority in time. He very probably meant that Sinhalese unity was the precondition without which inter-ethnic harmony would not be possible. Today, almost sixty years after he made that statement, it is clear that some measure of Sinhalese unity is the precondition for the meeting of conditions that are necessary for the preservation of the unity of this island. It may be that the chauvinist Bandaranaike had, at least in some ways, a more profound understanding of our ethnic problem than all the non-chauvinists put together.

In the rest of this article we will examine the problem of Sinhalese disunity in relation to the problem of preserving the unity of Sri Lanka. At the moment of writing, which is in early October, there is much euphoria in the Government, in the peace movement, and elsewhere over the success of the first round of talks in Thailand, and deep misgivings among a considerable section of the public, particularly over the LTTE setting up the institutions of a quasi-sovereign state in the North-East. The euphoria is understandable, but so are the deep misgivings because the final outcome remains uncertain.

We will firstly note the factors that make the euphoria understandable. After the Elephant Pass debacle of April 2000, and the prolonged military inaction that followed under the PA Government, it became obvious that there was no prospect of a military solution. The other fateful development at that time was the imposition of the GST, which meant that for the first time the economic costs of the war hit the stomachs of the Sinhalese in the South. That was followed by the economic debacle, compelling a recourse to the IMF. The conjunction of a military and an economic debacle has made the Sinhalese people more favourable than ever before to a peaceful solution based on a very considerable measure of

devolution.

The Tamil side has had to take into account the very terrible human costs of the war, and the unrelenting international opposition to the break-up of Sri Lanka which was so spectacularly displayed by the way some powerful countries rushed to help the Government at the time of the Elephant Pass debacle. India alone will make Eelam unrealisable for the foreseeable future.

A further factor is that after last September 11 the US and others are much more determined to put a stop to terrorism. For such reasons, it makes sense for the LTTE and the Tamil side to adopt a step-by-step approach to Eelam, or settle for something less.

A very positive development is the commitment of the international community, in the shape of several important countries, the UN and international agencies, towards demining of the North East, resettlement, rehabilitation, and restoration of socio-economic normalcy in those areas as quickly as possible. This is of crucial importance in a step-by-step peace process. The Prime Minister, and Ministers Peiris and Moragoda seem to have performed very creditably in getting that commitment.

The Government has to be commended also on its step-by-step peace process. Any attempt to deal with the core issues at the initial stage would certainly have resulted in a break-down of the talks at the initial stage. The Government need not be apologetic about its approach because it amounts really to an organic approach, according to which peace has to grow as it cannot be realised through the implementation of a blue-print. Our ethnic problem is so vexed that even the most perfect constitutional arrangements, with unanimity on all sides, may not result in peace. It all depends on how the arrangements are put into practice, and much else, for inter-ethnic trust to grow, providing the only sure foundation for peace.

There certainly seem to be good reasons for the euphoria. Unfortunately, there are also good reasons for the deep misgivings. They arise partly out of the fact emphasized in the preceding paragraph that peace and a final solution of the ethnic problem have to result from a process of growth. The present government may succeed in establishing an

Interim Administration Council, push through constitutional changes broadly acceptable to both the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Thereafter Sri Lanka can still proceed towards a final break-up or a final solution of the ethnic problem.

It is crucially important to take into account two negative features in the present situation. One is that the LTTE seems to be insisting on what amounts to a confederal arrangement, though the term "confederacy" is not being used. The other is that the LTTE insists on retaining its weapons.

The quarrel on the first point is not about nomenclature but about substance. In name there may be a Joint Task Force in which power is shared preparatory to the setting up of an Interim Administration Council. The reality on the ground is likely to be a unit covering the North and part of the East in which the LTTE calls the shots exclusively, allowing the Government to function only to the extent that it pleases the LTTE. The writ of the Government in Colombo will be implemented in that North-East unit only if it gets the concurrence of the LTTE. In other words, the defining characteristic of a confederacy will prevail in that unit.

A confederal arrangement will not amount to a break-up of Sri Lanka because power will be exercised in a part of Sri Lanka by Tamils, that is to say by Sri Lankans. It can be regarded as a break-up only if it is held that the Tamils are not Sri Lankans, or that they are second-class citizens who are not entitled to exercise any power on Sri Lankan soil. Such arguments will amount to conceding that the Tamils have a case for separation.

It is time to recognise that no amount of devolution can by itself lead to a break-up. By definition devolution can take place only within a single political unit. Sri Lanka can break-up only if the Sinhalese does not have the military means to prevent it, a situation that can come about if it proves impossible to defeat an armed Tamil rebellion and an economic collapse ensues making it impossible to buy the weapons to continue fighting.

However, a confederal arrangement can mean that a part of the island starts drifting away, and that certainly has dangerous implications when taken in conjunction with the fact that the other side retains control of its weapons, the sec-

ond of the two negative features to which we referred above. Balasingham declared after the first round of talks in Thailand that the weapons will not be given up until there is a final solution to the ethnic problem. In this writer's view, it is extremely unlikely that those weapons will be given up even after there is a final solution in the formal sense that devolutionary arrangements acceptable to the Tamil are in place, backed by Constitutional provisions. The Tamil side will give up those weapons only when it feels confident enough to do so.

In any case, one consequence of the LTTE retention of weapons has to be recognised. The LTTE will believe that it has in its hands the monopoly of the legitimate means of violence, which according to the Weberian definition of the state is the requisite for sovereignty. Consequently, it can be expected to regard any so-called "solution" as having no more than a provisional character, leaving it the option of striking out for Eelam again.

The fundamental problem confronting us is how to preserve the unity of Sri Lanka, though with a constitution that is no longer unitary, given the probability that very extensive devolution will turn out to be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for continued unity. Before dealing with that problem, it could be useful to point out that the underlying conditions are favourable, indeed very favourable, for the preservation of Sri Lankan unity. Those conditions have been negated for far too long by the divisive idiocy of our politics.

We must first of all set aside the misleading Swiss example. It is a superficially encouraging one because the Swiss cantons got so close to each other that now Switzerland is a confederacy only in name, the actuality being that of a federation. But that is the result of the fact that the Swiss Confederacy is really the manifestation of a powerful centripetal drive starting as far back as the thirteenth century. The confederal arrangements that presently seem to be taking shape in the North East of Sri Lanka are, on the contrary, a manifestation of what looks like a powerful centrifugal drive.

The most important underlying condition working for Sri Lanka's unity is geographical. It has a natural unity without mountain barriers like Switzerland, or any other geographical barriers that are

difficult to pass. That is why it was known from ancient times under single names such as Taprobane, Serendib, Lanka, and Ceylon. For that matter the term "Eelam" is said to designate the whole island, not a supposedly Tamil Part of it. There were of course several kingdoms in this single island, including a Tamil one for a relatively brief period, but the primordial and unalterable fact of geographical unity is there. It seems worth emphasising this geographical unity because the idea of geography determining history seems alien to Anglo-Saxon traditions of thought, by which we Sri Lankans are mainly influenced, whereas it seems to be a commonplace in France partly because of the influence of its great historian Fernand Braudel.

Other factors favouring unity are well-known, such as the economic complementarity between North and South, and the demographic factor which makes a sizeable proportion of Tamils seek economic opportunities in the South. Finally, contrary to what might be suggested by the myth of a racial divide between Aryan Sinhalese and Dravidian Tamils, and tendentious readings of past conflicts as racial when they were really dynastic wars, there is the fact of long periods of amity and co-operation between Sinhalese and Tamils, and even a significant degree of symbiosis between them.

It is not really surprising, to this writer that the English anthropologist Jonathan Spencer, who did field-work in Sri Lanka between 1982 and 1984, should have written, "In casual conversations all over the island, during my stay, I uncovered a great deal more anti-Muslim than anti-Tamil feeling, but this feeling was largely contained by the absence of public challenge to Buddhist power from Muslim political leaders."

It is the underlying ground conditions outlined above that could explain something of the greatest significance which has got nothing like the recognition it deserves. It is that our Tamils belong to the category of what has been called "reluctant separatists". The TULF first adopted its Eelam resolution at Vaddukodai as late as 1976, that is twenty eight years after Independence, and the militant struggle for Eelam really got going after 1983, that is thirty five years after Independence. (The Island, 8 Nov. 2002) □

British MPs tour north

October 16 - Progress in peace talks will largely determine if Britain will lift the ban on the LTTE or not, said Mr. Gareth Thomas, British Member

of Parliament, after visiting Jaffna and Vanni areas accompanied by Mr. Robert Evans, Member of European Parliament.

Mr. Robert Evans and Mr. Gareth Thomas met Mr. S.P. Thamichelvan of the LTTE and had discussions for about one and a half hours, according to the LTTE sources.

The British MPs arrived in Jaffna and visited Vadamarachchi, Kaithadi and Chavakachcheri. They met the Principal of Harley College, Mr. Sri Pathy in Point Pedro and had discussions with the representatives of the Students Union of Jaffna University. They also had discussions with Major General Anton Wijendra at the Palaly army base.

Meeting local press in Vavuniya enroute to Colombo, Mr. Evans said, "I was in Jaffna two years ago. The town has made significant process toward normality. But we are very conscious of the need to move forward. There seems to be a lot of evidence of re-building and it is heartening to see the people not only are going about with their own lives but looking forward with optimism towards the future.

"We are very enthusiastic about the peace process and the prospects for the country settling down and moving forward. No one thinks it is going to be easy. Negotiations towards reaching a settlement will be difficult and will take time. But the mere fact that within a matter of months talks are taking place and more talks are planned is very encouraging to all people of Sri Lanka."

When asked about the meetings with the officials of the security forces and with the political head of the LTTE Mr. Evans said, "We discussed with both sides on issues related to landmines, recruitment policies of child soldiers, resettlement, and their commitment to the peace process. Although there are differences between the sides in some aspects, over all we are satisfied with the positive nature of responses."

Mr. Robert Evans said that they were impressed on the changes which has taken place in Colombo and Jaffna after the peace process started to move forward.

"I have noticed a marked decrease of the military presence and road blocks in Colombo. Situation is similar in Jaffna. We didn't feel in any way insecure or on the edge in Jaffna. We went out in the evening and it was fine. Equally in the Vanni, there was no show of military strength by the LTTE."

Mr. Gareth Thomas said he joined this visit to see for himself the ground situation in the country in general and particularly in Vanni, the area controlled by the LTTE.

"I wanted to see how the peace process is working and I am very much encouraged by the way things are going on here now. We hope the peace process will continue and the sense of peace and the sense of goodwill will deepen.

"One of the issues they have raised with me is the ban on the LTTE. The truth is the ban on the LTTE is not likely to be lifted until we see how the peace process unfolds. The reason I have come to Sri Lanka is because I have a large number of Tamil constituents, in some areas 10% of residents are Sri Lankans," he said.

Media Research Centre opened

October 16 - The High Commissioner of Denmark for India who is also accredited to Sri Lanka, declared open the Media

NEWS TRACK

Research and Training Centre in the Jaffna University. "Eleven member countries in the European Union (EU) are wholeheartedly supporting the peace process now being

taken forward with the sole intention of finding a lasting political solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka," said Mr. Michael Steraberg, High Commissioner of Denmark when addressing a gathering following the opening of the centre.

The Centre is established with the financial assistance of Denmark. Denmark has allocated eighteen million rupees to this centre, which would provide diploma courses for medical personnel

Mr. Steraberg further said, "the EU earnestly looking forward the success of peace talks between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE."

A delegation of the EU headed by Mr. Peter Lysholt Hansen, Under Secretary of State also participated at the event.

Later the EU delegation met the local journalists. Answering question the leader of the EU delegation Mr. Hansen said that they met the LTTE political advisor Dr. Anton Balasingham and political head Mr. S.P. Thamilselvan at Killinochchi on their way to Jaffna by A 9 highway. Mr. Hansen further said that EU delegation discussed the question of de-mining the northeast and regarding the resettlement of internally displaced in their areas with LTTE leaders at Killinochchi. EU member countries are prepared to assist both parties concerned in this regard.

The delegation head said he noted considerable progress in the peace talks now being held. The delegation had met the President and the Prime Minister and held discussion with them regard to the peace process. He wanted the media in the island to play a constructive role in taking forward the peace process in a constructive note.

Landmark SC judgment in PTA case

October 16, 2002 - The Supreme Court today set aside the conviction by a High Court and acquitted the accused in a Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) case. The three-member bench of the SC, which heard the appeal of the accused, held that "it is contrary to law to punish a person only on his confession without any corroborative evidence against him." The SC bench comprised Justices C.V. Vigneswaran, Mark Fernando and Ameer Ismail.

The Anti-Subversive Unit of the Police arrested the accused, Nagamany Theivendran, in Colombo in 1996 under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) for obtaining arms training from the LTTE and aiding and abetting it. The Attorney General indicted the accused in the High Court in 1997. The HC Judge after trial sentenced the accused to seven years rigorous imprisonment, accepting the confession purported to have been made by the accused voluntarily.

The accused appealed to the Court of Appeal (CA) stating that he could not be punished only on his confession without any corroborating evidence against him. However the Court of Appeal also confirmed the order by the High Court Judge in the case. The accused then appealed to the Supreme Court against the HC conviction and sentence imposed on him which were confirmed by the CA.

The three-member bench of the Supreme Court took the appeal Wednesday after hearing the appeal set aside the conviction and sentence imposed on the accused only on his con-

fession without any corroborating evidence against him.

Diplomatic delegation meets Balasingham

October 16 - An eight-member diplomatic delegation from Denmark, Greece and Italy held discussions with the Mr. Anton Balasingham, LTTE's chief negotiator, in Killinochchi, today. The diplomats expressed their fullest support to the current peace process and assured their readiness to provide funds for North-east development and de-mining in the province, LTTE sources in Vanni said.

Mrs. Adele Balasingham and Mr.S.P.Thamilchelvan, the Head of the LTTE's Political Wing accompanied Mr.Balasingham in the discussions.

The diplomats later visited the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) office in Kilinochchi and held discussions with Dr.J.Maheswaran, an expert in Development and Rehabilitation and a member of the LTTE delegation that participated in the first round of talks at Sattahip, Thailand. Dr. Maheswaran explained to the diplomats the details of projects carried out by the TRO.

The diplomatic mission comprised: Michael Sternberg (Ambassador of Denmark, New Delhi), Salvatore Zotta (Ambassador of Italy, Colombo), Stathis Lozos (Ambassador of Greece, New Delhi), Peter Lysholt Hansen (Under - Secretary of State, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Charlotte Laursen (Head of section, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Ana Ramirez Fueyo (External relations/Asia desk Principal Administrator - Council of the European Union), Anastassios Vikas (Deputy Director general, adjoint DG E -PESC-Affairs regionales) and, Markus Cornaro (Head of Unit from the commission).

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Five soldiers charged

October 18 - The Attorney General Friday filed indictments in the Colombo High Court against five Sri Lanka Army soldiers for murdering eight Tamil civilians, including a five year old child, in Mirusuvil in Jaffna district two years ago.

The civilians who were displaced from Mirusuvil and were living in Pt.Pedro in northern Sri Lanka. They were arrested by the soldiers when they went to Mirusuvil area in 19 December to collect their personnel belongings from their houses. The names of the accused SLA personnel are: Lance corporal Sunil Ratnayake, Lieutenant Senaka Munasinghe, Corporal M.Jayaratna, Corporal Gamini Munasinghe and Saman Pushpakumara.

The accused army officials have been charged on nineteen counts including the murder of the eight Tamil civilians and disposing their bodies in a toilet pit at Mirusuvil, south of Jaffna district

The Chief Justice Mr.Sarath N.Silva has named a three-member bench of the High Court to hear the case without jury. The HC bench comprises Judges Mr.I.M.Imam, Mr.Sarath Ambepitya and Mr. Kumar Ekaratne.

SC on constitutional amendments

October 22 - The Speaker of the Sri Lanka's parliament announced on 22 October the decision of the Supreme Court on the eighteenth and nineteenth constitutional amendments tabled by the United National Front government.

The 27 page-decision of the Supreme Court in regarding the nineteenth amendment stated that it should be approved by two third majority in parliament and subjected to a referendum if it is to be passed in its original form except Clause 6. The Clause 6 on voting according to conscience should be removed as it amounted to a suspension of the Constitution. Hence this clause cannot be rectified even by a referendum.

Clause 6 of the nineteenth amendment stated that the parliamentary seats of the members who voted in favour of it would not be lost. The SC states in its decision that, " Clause 6 is against the law and the present constitution. This Clause should be removed from the amendment."

The SC further states in its decision that the power conferred on the President to dissolve parliament after one year of its existence should be amended. "Accordingly the one year period given to the President to dissolve parliament should be extended to three years. Two third majority is adequate to extend the period from one year to three years," the SC said.

The Supreme Court held that the eighteenth amendment, in its entirety, needs a two third majority and a referendum. The eighteenth amendment dealt with the immunity for members of the constitutional council.

Protests against privatization

October 24 - Thousands of workers belonging to state and private sector establishments today held a large demonstration for about an hour in front of the Fort Railway station in the heart of Colombo protesting against the United National Front government's (UNF's) privatization policy. They shouted slogans and carried placards condemning the wholesale sell out of the country's remaining resources to the transnational companies.

Demonstrators later participated in a protest march at around 12.30 in the afternoon from Fort railway station to Hyde Park where a rally was held. Members of more than twenty-five independent trade unions and Peoples' Action Groups partici-

pated in the demonstration.

Representatives of the Alliance of the Protection of National Resources, Ceylon Electricity Board joint trade unions, Ceylon Bank Employees Union, Ceylon Mercantile Union, Sri Lanka Insurance Workers' Union, United Federation of Labour, Independent General Service Union, Free Trade Zone Workers Unions and Railway trade unions participated in the demonstration and the rally held at Hyde Park.

75 PTA Detainees to be released

October 25 - Detainees arrested under the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) languishing in jails, some for several years, are to be released gradually said Attorney General (AG), K.C. Kanagasabeyson. The Government will soon drop the charges on seventy five of the detainees and release them, the Attorney General added.

The only charge against majority of the detainees held in Kalutara, Welikada and Batticaloa jails is their self-confessions, generally forced under threat of torture, sources said.

Earlier this month, as part of prisoner exchange between the Government of Sri Lanka and Liberation Tigers, thirteen members of the LTTE were released.

Following this, the detainees held a fast to death campaign in the different jails forcing Tamil parliamentarians and ministers from the government to visit the prisoners and to promise remedial actions. During Minister Milinda Moragoda's visit on behalf of Prime Minister Wickremesinghe, he had assured the prisoners that he would take up the matter with the AG.

300,000 children immunized

October 27 - "Sri Lanka is in the verge of being certified a polio free nation by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2003 depending on the successful implementation of the immunization campaign held in the northeast province this year," said Dr Mrs. S. Weeraman, member of the National Polio Eradication Committee of the Ministry of Health participating in the immunization programme event held at the office of the Medical Officer of Health, Trincomalee. The immunization campaign against polio was concluded 26 October in the Northeast province.

Nearly three hundred thousand children under five in the eight districts of the northeast were given second dose Saturday. The first round of the polio campaign was carried out on September 28. The Epidemiological Unit of the Health Ministry and the UNICEF organized the immunization programme.

Although no cases of polio have been reported since 1993, the northeast province has been identified as a high-risk area due to the recent inflow of displaced people from India and other areas raising the possible outbreak of the disease, health ministry sources said.

Except Northeast, other provinces have been reported free of polio by the health authorities. Since 1996 every year immunization programme against polio has been conducted in the northeast, sources said. But only this year a fully comprehensive immuniza-

tion programme was held in the northeast, sources said.

Dr Genitiz Dedo, Team Leader of the Integrated Food Security Programme (IFSP) of the German Technical Co-operation said "We give more importance to the health of the children in villages where IFSP programmes are implemented."

Protesters demand removal of camps

October 31 - Hundreds of displaced Tamil civilians Thursday launched a sit-in-protest in front of the Chavakacheri Divisional Secretary (DS) office, demanding the immediate removal of the Sri Lanka Army camp located between Puttur junction and Kanaganpuliyadi junction in Thenmaradchi area in Jaffna district.

Protestors locked the main gate of the office and the Divisional Secretary and turned away other officials attempting to enter the premises, sources said.

A spokesman Consortium of Welfare Organisation of the Thenmaradchi, which organised the protest, said more than fifty houses of displaced have been occupied by the 51 Brigade of the SLA in the area.

Around fifty police personnel without arms were at the scene to maintain law and order. SLA soldiers were also seen about two hundred meters away from the DS office, protestors said.

An official of the consortium said that the sit-in-protest would continue till the SLA camp is removed from the area leaving the houses for the displaced to occupy.

Curfew re-imposed in Colombo

October 31 - Colombo north and central areas were again placed under curfew to quell further violence between the Sinhalese and Muslims, which has left one killed and at least a dozen wounded, police sources said. Muslims who took part in the funeral of the Muslim person who was killed during clashes on 31 October, attacked a Buddhist monk on the following day. Another Muslim man was wounded when the Police opened fire to disperse the crowd.

The injured has been warded in Colombo general hospital in a critical condition, medical sources said.

The police said the curfew which has been imposed in nine police divisions, Maradana, Maligawatte, Grandpass, Dematagoda, Keselwatte, Kotahena and Modera in the city of Colombo would be lifted the following day.

Meanwhile, at a top level security conference presided over by the Prime Minister Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, at Temple Trees, it was decided to close all schools in the Colombo central, Colombo north and Borella areas to avert further clashes.

Tension built up for several days between the two communities over the construction of a building by Muslims at Bodhirajarama Mawatte, Maradana. The Sinhalese claim that Muslims are constructing a mosque close to the Buddhist shrine in the area. The Muslims, however, said that they were expanding an existing Arabic school with the permission of the law courts.

In the incidents incidents eleven three-wheelers, four lor-



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ries, nine motor bicycles, six bicycles, eight shops and two houses were completely burnt. In addition, several other business establishments were also damaged. Muslim religious leaders and Buddhist priests have made appeals to their respective communities to show restraint and to help the law enforcement authorities to maintain law and order in bring the tense situation under control.

Navy seizes LTTE boat with arms

November 1 - A Sri Lanka Navy patrol today intercepted a LTTE boat in the seas between Trincomalee and Sampoor off the east coast of Trincomalee with communications equipment and an outboard motor but a subsequent search by the Harbour Police revealed it contained a load of claymore mines.

The search came after the Sri Lanka Navy handed over the boat and the six Tiger cadres who were on board to the Harbour Police. The six were later produced before the Trincomalee Magistrate who remanded them in custody.

The detection and the movement of the Tiger boat has been regarded as a violation of the Ceasefire Agreement.

Four Navy patrol craft operating in the seas some five miles off Foul Point in Trincomalee had detected the Tiger boat some five kilometres off the shore. The Navy patrols had only detected a 40 horsepower engine, 12 man packs, an amplifier and an antenna mast. The Navy seized the boat and seven Tigers on board. They were handed over to the Harbour Police who had conducted a thorough search of the LTTE vessel. They found 35 claymore mines carefully concealed in the boat. The Tiger guerrilla boat is said to have brought the grenades from a Sea Tiger base in Vakarai. They were to be delivered at a location in Trincomalee, according to Navy sources.

SLMM cautions LTTE

Raising concerns over the arrest of six LTTE cadres with explosives, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) yesterday called on the LTTE to "strictly abide" by the Ceasefire Agreement. "What happened on Friday (1 November) was a serious breach of the Ceasefire Agreement and the SLMM has called on the LTTE leadership in Kilinochchi to strictly abide by the Ceasefire Agreement," SLMM Deputy Head Hagruph Haukland told the press.

Haukland said the SLMM had advised the LTTE to "keep their horses chained". "We don't want to see a recurrence of events like Sep 25," Haukland said, referring to the detention of seven soldiers in Trincomalee by the LTTE following the arrest of two LTTE cadres by the police.

Tiger leader sentenced to 200 years

November 1 - LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran was sentenced to 200 years jail on 31 October for his role in the January 1996 attack on the Central Bank complex in the heart of Colombo in which a suicide squad of the Tamil Tigers rammed an explosives-laden truck into the building killing and wounding hundreds of people.

Three other LTTE members were also given the same sentence while two were given life imprisonment by the Colombo High Court which tried Mr. Prabhakaran in absentia. The court also released four others including LTTE intelligence chief Pottu Amman due to lack of evidence.

High Court judge Sarath Ambepitiya issued an open warrant through the CID to arrest Mr. Prabhakaran and three others who were absconding. He said the LTTE leader was guilty on 51 counts and each count carried 20 years in jail making a

total of 1020 years. But for practical purposes the Judge said he was imposing the sentence only on the first ten counts making a total of 200 years in jail.

The Judge said evidence of Mr. Prabhakaran's involvement was found in a plaque he had given to the fourth suspect at a dinner a few days before the explosion. This was revealed in a confession by the suspect who said the LTTE leader encouraged him to commit the crime. The finger prints on the plaque were the same as Mr. Prabhakaran's finger prints taken in the 1980s while he was under arrest in India.

In this case ten accused including the LTTE leader and Pottu Amman were indicted on 712 counts including conspiracy, aiding and abetting, intention to cause death and committing murder, destruction of state property by attacking the Central Bank and provoking violence on or around January 31, 1996.

Out of ten accused only two - W. Parthivan and K. T. Shivakumar - were arrested and were present in court during the trial.

The High Court judge convicted the six accused on 51 counts and stated that 51 murders were proved while 76 people were killed in the attack. In the 126-page judgment the Judge said people who were responsible for killing of so many and caused damage to the tune of about Rs. 550 million should be removed from society. Under Section 4 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act the court ordered that the property of the accused be confiscated.

De-Mining Operations Completed

November 1 - The US-sponsored Quick Reaction De-mining Force (QRDF) completed its work in the Northeast Sri Lanka on October 25. In a statement, the US Embassy in Colombo, hailed the QRDF saying it has removed landmines from nearly 123,000 square meters of land, located in the Sarasaalai area in northern Sri Lanka.

It said, "This land has been cleared in compliance with exacting international humanitarian de-mining standards and cleared of 980 anti-personnel mines and 42 pieces of unexploded ordnance. Additionally, the team collected and destroyed numerous other pieces of unexploded ordnance from elsewhere in the region, which had been brought to its attention by local residents."

Mr. Ashley Wills, US Ambassador for Sri Lanka, said American Embassy is proud to assist the people and Government of Sri Lanka in this important step of rehabilitation and reconstruction, which, in turn, will reinforce the peace process. He said de-mining, as well as the removal of unexploded ordnance, is for the benefit of all Sri Lankans.

Mr. Murphy McCoy, Jr., the US State Department's Senior De-mining Advisor, described the QRDF project as slow, time-consuming work. Now that it has been completed, however, people can have confidence that the areas in which we have worked have been de-mined to international standards. He said the US remains fully committed to supporting humanitarian mine clearance in Sri Lanka. In early 2003 - following the conclusion of the Northeast monsoon - the US will support the next step in the de-mining effort - establishing a humanitarian mine clearance training program for Sri Lankan civilian and military personnel so that Sri Lankans can continue the work in the island.

EPDP councillor attacked

November 3 - Opposition Leader of the Chavakachcheri Town Council, Soosaimuttu Alexander (EPDP) sustained seri-

ous injuries in an attack by unidentified persons. He was later admitted to the base Hospital, Manthikai, Point Pedro, yesterday. The EPDP has accused the LTTE of the attack.

Chavakachcheri Town Council is controlled by the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE). Soosaimuttu Alexander, 38, was at his fiancée's residence when the attack took place. Two persons with clubs and swords entered the house and attacked Soosaimuttu while he tried to defend himself with a stick.

The EPDP Parliamentarian K. Thavaraja told the press that this was the latest of a series of attacks on EPDP cadres in the Peninsula of late which has been brought to the notice of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission.

Buddhist prelates briefed on Thailand talks.

November 05 - The Constitutional Affairs Minister Monday briefed the Mahanayake Theras of Malwatte and Asgiriya Chapters the outcome of the second round of peace talks held between the United National Front government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Thailand last week.

Professor Peiris who led the government peace delegation at Thailand talks called on the Mahanayake Thera of the Asgiriya Chapter Venerable Buddhakarita and told him that the LTTE is now prepared to accept a political solution within the framework of the united country. The Minister told the prelate that the peace talk facilitated by the Norwegian government between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE is now being taken forward in the correct path.

The donor countries have expressed confidence that both parties to the conflict, the Liberation Tigers and the Government of Sri Lanka are sincere in their attempt to find a permanent peace, Minister Peiris told the prelates who went to Kandy, central capital of the country on Minister's return to Colombo Sunday from Thailand.

The Mahanayake Thera of Asgiriya Chapter expressed his appreciation for the flexibility shown by the delegations of the government and the LTTE at the Thailand peace talks arriving at decisions on important matters such as the proposal for formation of Joint Task Force and other committees to diffuse tension and finding a political solution to the conflict, sources said.

Bribery officials quiz JVP leader

November 05 - The parliamentary group leader of the Sinhala nationalist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), Mr. Wimal Weerawansa, today appeared before the Bribery and Corruption Commission on notice. He was quizzed by a team of bribery officials about a complaint lodged by a person from Piliyandala that he was maintaining a bank account with another person in the name of JVP.

The Bribery and Corruption Commission last month noticed Mr. Weerawansa to appear for an investigation into the complaint lodged by one Lal Perera.

Mr. Weerawansa went to the commission office with his Attorney-at-Law. Commission officials had interrogated him for several hours, sources said. The JVP is the third largest political party in the present parliament with sixteen members.

US, Britain pledge support and aid

November 5 - The United States and Britain, which have banned the LTTE, today praised the progress of Sri Lanka's peace talks and said they would participate in an aid conference to rebuild areas damaged by two decades of war.

"We praise the commitment of both sides to sustain the ceasefire and move forward with the peace progress," the U.S. Embassy said in a statement. "The U.S. looks forward to participating in the November 25 (aid) conference in Oslo, which will focus on improving the humanitarian and developmental situation," it said.

Britain also issued a statement commending the government and the LTTE for their flexibility and expressing optimism on the talks. Britain's Foreign Office Minister Mike O'Brien said the second session of talks in Thailand had been "positive and constructive". "We now look forward to the Oslo Conference on November 25. We believe it will provide a good opportunity to add further impetus to the process of humanitarian and relief action in the north and east," he said. Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development, will attend the Oslo conference on 25 November.

Budget presented to Parliament

November 06 - The Sri Lanka's Finance Minister Wednesday presented the second budget of the ruling United National Front government in parliament that emphasized on generating employment and developing the rural sector. "With the support expected from development partners in Oslo and Tokyo the UNF government will launch a number of new projects next year for the creating a number of productive employment opportunities," said Finance Minister Mr. K.N. Choksy when delivering his budget speech.

"The UNF government has an agenda of reforms to implement over the next twelve months. The Economic Management Law would be introduced in parliament to ensure full implementation of the economic reforms. Under the said law the government has to report to parliament twice a year the progress made by each ministry in implementing economic reforms," said Mr. K.N. Choksy.

Budget deficit should be reduced and under utilized State owned commercial assets would be sold to overcome the debt crisis. The UNF government has succeeded in increasing the growth rate of last year negative figure to an estimated positive 3 % of the GDP in 2002. The rate of inflation has been reduced from 14.2% to 9 %," said Mr. Choksy.

Tigers confiscate goods

November 6 - The LTTE has confiscated two more consignments of north-bound goods at Uyilankulam entry/exit point, claiming the goods were deliberately under-valued to escape taxation. An army spokesman said a complaint made by A. W. M. Hilmy from Gampola at Vavuniya Police Station on November 3 stated that his van with a consignment of tea leaves to be sold in Jaffna, was held back by LTTE on October 28 at the above entry/exit point, saying that the given value of his stocks were relatively low, compared to the stocks sent there earlier.

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He was later produced before an LTTE leader in the area, who in turn released the van on November 3 without the tea leaves.

In a similar incident, another businessman A. A. Nazar from Ulapane in a complaint to the Vavuniya Police station has mentioned that his consignment of textiles, wrist watches and some other valuable items were not allowed beyond Uyilankulam entry/exit point on October 28 claiming that prices of those goods were also relatively low, compared to previous loads that were despatched to Jaffna. He was also later produced before an LTTE leader and his van was released sans his consignment of goods.

Similarly on September 27, another consignment of goods were not allowed into Jaffna by LTTEs at Omanthai entry/exit point attributing the same reasons.

LTTE to supervise NGOs work

November 06 - The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam stressed better co-ordination between the local non-governmental organisations in implementing rehabilitation and reconstruction projects in the Trincomalee district. "From January next year we will supervise all projects carried out by local NGOs in the district with a view to rectify shortcomings, duplication of works and other discrepancies. However, we will not directly interfere with the administration of the NGOs," said Mr. S. Tilak, LTTE district political head at a discussion held on 6 October at Trincomalee Valluvar Kottam.

Representatives of all local NGOs in the Trincomalee district participated in the discussion. Mr. Rajesh, LTTE Trincomalee town political head also attended.

Mr. Tilak pointed out several shortcomings in the activities

of the local NGO in the district. "These shortcomings could be rectified and urgent needs of the affected villages and the people could be fulfilled only through coordinated activities of the local NGOs, which are depended on the financial assistance provided by international NGOs," said Mr. Tilak.

He criticised that NGOs undertake rehabilitation projects in a single village at the same time another village which needed much assistance is completely ignored by these institutions. "£And also we could notice several NGOs implement same type of projects in one village. All these could be avoided if local NGOs co-ordinate their activities and formulate a common programme for the year, 2003," stressed Mr. Tilak.

Mr. Tilak requested the representatives of local NGOs to submit their proposals for the year 2003 before December 1, 2002 to assess them and to avoid duplication. He advised that the Consortium of NGOs in Trincomalee district should appoint a committee for this purpose.

More Tamil Eelam police stations

November 07 - LTTE opened its first Tamil Eelam Police station in Trincomalee district at Sampoor today, according to LTTE sources. The Sampoor station is the 19th of the Tamil Eelam police stations opened in recent months. The Liberation Tigers on 5 November opened a new police station in Palugamam at a ceremony attended by local government officials and community and religious leaders.

The opening of the new police station in the LTTE controlled area of Palugamam, in the Vellavelly Divisional Secretariat, Batticaloa, was presided by the movement's Batticaloa-Ampara military commander, Kangai Alagan.



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The LTTE's Special Commander for Batticaloa-Ampara, Ramesh, raised the Tamil Eelam flag. Mrs. Arul, mother of fallen LTTE soldier, Senthoran, lit the flame.

The head of the LTTE's Batticaloa-Ampara Political Wing, Mr. Kausalyan, the Batticaloa Additional Government Agent, V Shanmugam, unveiled the nameboard. Jeyapura District Judge Thillai cut the ribbon to open the reception. LTTE Special Commander Ramesh cut the ribbon to open the station.

Rev. Fr Thiruselvam and Kattankudy Muslim Peace Committee President S Muhaideen participated.

The head of the women's section of the LTTE's Batticaloa-Ampara Political Wing, Ms. Bhanuka and the local head of intelligence, Mr. Ramanan addressed the event. Sub-Inspector Rajakopal gave vote of thanks.

LTTE to return gold

November 8 - In a different form of a golden hand shake with the people, the LTTE has decided to return the gold it had collected from about 40,000 families for the war effort six years ago.

The LTTE today announced in Jaffna that the first batch will receive the gold from November 21 and thereafter it would take place in stages with each family getting back two sovereigns.

The LTTE's financial division chief V.Thamilendhi said the first batch of 2500 families to receive the gold had been selected by way of a draw. The LTTE had demanded two gold sovereigns each from every family living in the Jaffna peninsula when it was in control of the Jaffna peninsula. It was compulsory for the families to make the contribution. The Financial division head said that they were now in a position to return the gold as the money was no longer required for the war effort.

STF action justified

November 9 - The action taken by the Special Task Force (STF) to repel the mob which attacked the Kanchirankudah Camp in eastern Sri Lanka was justified as there was an imminent danger to the camp being overrun by the attackers, the Committee that investigated the incident has said in its report.

The STF had not exceeded the rights of self defence. But the STF had used 28 bullets which was too much, observed former Air Vice Marshal Harry Gunatilleke at the media conference held at the Interior Ministry on 8 November.

The former Air Force chief, who was the Chairman of the three member committee that probed the attack on the STF Kanchirankudah Camp on October 9, 2002, handed over the report to Interior Minister John Amaraturunga.

The other members of the committee were former High Court Judge Oliver Weerasena and Samiththambi Vivekanandan, who represented the people in the area.

Vivekanandan handed over a dissenting report to the Minister and said he would not fully agree with the report submitted by the Committee Chairman.

The Chairman told the media that he had viewed a video film in which he saw how the mob entered the camp and damaged the buildings.

Following the attack seven persons died and over 15 persons were injured. The incident first occurred when LTTE cadres travelling in a tractor had failed to obey the stop order made by STF personnel manning the camp entrance, the Committee chairman said.

The former Air Force chief observed that the LTTE leader-

ship had not been given the correct picture of the incident by its cadres. Minister Amaraturunga directed Vivekanandan, one of the committee members, to inform the LTTE leader about the correct position of the incident and not to have repetition of such incident.

The Interior Minister said he would study both reports submitted to him before making any suggestions and also observed that he would not blame any party involved in the incident. Interior Ministry Secretary M.N. Junaid, Ministry Advisor M. Somasunderam and former DIG Lal Ratnayake also participated.

Bridge to Rameshwaram a reality soon

November 8 - The bridge linking Sri Lanka and India will soon become a reality, Power and Energy Minister Karu Jayasuriya said. Addressing parliament, the minister said the 29-kilometre bridge between Mannar and Rameshwaram in South India would not only link Sri Lanka with India but also 24 Asian countries covering more than 90,000 kilometres. The Minister said that satellite photos taken by US space agency NASA had shown that there was evidence of a man made bridge linking the two sides dating back to several thousand years. He said the creation of the bridge would be a great boost to the country with an increase in trade and tourism between the two neighbours. He said that essential items such as electricity and gas could be purchased from each other when the need arose and trade with other countries would also increase through the land link. He said that when the bridge was first proposed, it seemed like an impossible dream but today it was on the verge of becoming a reality. The bridge would be built without taxing the people and the proposals for this had already been forwarded to the government.

The minister also spoke on the historical links between the two countries stating that the bridge between the two countries mentioned in the Ramanaya and the one that King Gajaba travelled to India by parting water were believed to be between Mannar and Rameshwaram.

Protest against 200-year sentence

November 9 - A three mile long procession to demonstrate the people's sympathy against the sentence of 200 year imprisonment on LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran started from the Jaffna University Parameshwara temple courtyard and wended its way through Palaly road, Stanley road, Kasthuriar road, Hospital road, and reached the Jaffna Secretariat this afternoon.

Thousands of students, teachers, representatives of NGOs, members of fishermen's society, priests and members of the public participated in the procession. A memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Minister of Justice and the Foreign diplomats in Sri Lanka was handed over to T. Vythilingam, Additional Government Agent, Jaffna to be faxed to them.

First Tigers-GOSL defence officials meet

November 10 - The government and the LTTE met today for the first time in a series of meetings in the Sub-committee on De-escalation and Normalisation in the north and east areas, the Norwegian embassy said.

The embassy in a statement said the delegations headed by Defence Secretary Austin Fernando on behalf of the government and LTTE Batticaloa Commander Karuna from the Tigers met at Omanthai where procedural and matters relating to fishing in the coast of Jaffna were discussed. It said the five-hour meeting which included lunch took place in a cordial and

constructive atmosphere. The parties agreed on dates for district level meetings and their participants, the statement said. It was also agreed that eight entry points in Karainagar, Kayts, Mathagal and Punngudutivu would be kept open on a day and night basis for the convenience of fishermen. The location of these entry points is to be announced by Wednesday, it said. The next committee meeting is scheduled to be held on December 14 in Omanthai.

"The meeting was successful for the simple reason that it was cordial. We started talking to each other quite openly and I think it should be considered as a successful one. We came to some decisions about the meetings to be held in the future. Then we worked on issues such as fishing, the return of IDPs. All that was discussed and we have decided to hold district level meetings in Jaffna, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara. As we go on, I think we will get better results out of the issues we have looked at (today)," said Mr. Austin Fernando, Secretary to Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence, speaking to presspersons after the meeting.

The Government agreed to further relax restrictions in fishing in the Northern seas. The LTTE's team led by senior commander Col. Karuna comprised the commander of its northern front forces, Col. Theepan, the commander of its western front forces, Col. Jeyam, the commander of LTTE forces in Trincomalee, Col. Pathuman, Lt. Col. Seliyan, the head of LTTE's political division in Trincomalee, Mr. Thilak, head of political division in Batticaloa, Mr. Kousalyan, head of political division in Vavuniya, Mr. Elilan, head of political division in Jaffna, Mr. Ilamparithi and Mr. Pulithevan.

The Sri Lanka team led by Mr. Austin Fernando comprised Major. Gen. Shantha Kottegoda, Maj. Gen S. R. Balasuriya, Rear Admiral S. P. Weerasekera, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) of the STF Mr. Nimal Lewke, Kalmaunai, Kalmunai SSP M. A. Majeed, Group Captain Kolitha Gunatilake of the Sri Lanka Air Force and Brig. (ret) Devinda Kalupahana. Mr. Pulithevan came for meeting with the Norwegian Ambassador Jon Westborg and other officials of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Colombo. Head of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission Trond Furhovde was also present.

Northern Muslim body writes to PM

November 11 - The Northern Muslims' Right Organization in a letter to Prim Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe says that nearly 100,000 Muslims were displaced from North due to the situation prevailed for nearly two decades. They were compelled to live in refugee camps and welfare centres and our organisation has been involved in various activities for their welfare.

"There is a separate Ministry under the Minister Rauff Hakeem for rehabilitation and development work for Eastern Muslims. A number of projects and programmes are being carried out for the development of Eastern Muslims by this Ministry. There is another Ministry under Minister Noordeen Mashoor for the development of Muslims living in Vanni District. This Ministry too plans and implements development programmes for Muslims living in Vanni District," the letter stated.

It added: "The issues of Jaffna Muslims have not been considered seriously and rationally up to now by the Ministries mentioned above. We cannot forget the valuable services rendered by Prof. Jayalath Jaywardena through his Ministry to Muslims of Jaffna. Our organisation had the privilege to work with him to resolve some main issues faced by our people. The money allocated to the Ministry of Rehabilitating, Resettlement and Refugees is not sufficient to cope with the work pertaining

to rehabilitation and resettlement. As such our organisation requests you to allocate sufficient funds to this Ministry.

"The Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees is identified as a Non Cabinet Ministry whereas some Regional Development Ministries are of cabinet status. The Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees has an important role to play in the development of North, which is a priority under peace process. Our organisation humbly requests you to elevate the status of the Ministry to Cabinet Ministry.

"This will pave the way for proper and speedy implementation of rehabilitation and resettlement programmes in the North."

JVP blamed for violence

November 11 - The government today accused the JVP of being behind the killing of the Sri Jayawardhanapura university student and other violence including the slaying of the Walallawita Pradeshiya Sabha chairman and earlier shoot-out between police and tea factory demonstrators at Walasmulla.

Interior Minister John Amararatunga making a special statement in Parliament said JVP suspects had been arrested in connection with these incidents but a JVP spokesman denied the government's charge and challenged it to produce proof.

The minister said up to 800 demonstrators had been involved in the shoot-out with the police at Walasmulla after a dispute over the alleged non-payment of salaries to workers. He said police had moved in after the estate management had expressed fear over the loss of life or property. He said the crowd had first pelted stones at the police and then some persons in the crowd had opened fire injuring five constables. He charged that the mob had then set fire to a police bus and jeep while others had tried to set fire to the factory.

Walasmulla police Inspector N A G Chandrasena told reporters that at least six people including five policemen were injured and a police bus and jeep were set ablaze after a clash erupted between the Walasmulla police and a group of tea factory employees.

He said the dispute arose when police tried to disperse a group of factory employees who were staging a protest over the non-payment of salaries. The angry employees who claimed they had not been paid their salaries for three months had gate crashed into the factory premises and some had got on top of the roof. Police had gone to the scene after allegations that some factory property had been damaged and the situation had apparently calmed down.

Police said however the situation worsened by late evening when the protesters attempted to set fire to the factory building. When the police arrived at the scene, angry protesters had hurled stones at them forcing police to open fire. Hundreds of protesters had then set fire to the police bus and jeep. Police however said the situation was brought under control while five people had been arrested.

SLA provides escort to LTTE cadres

November 11 - A contingent of 185 members of the Liberation Tigers (LTTE) arrived in Batticaloa from the northern Vanni region today with special commander for Batticaloa-Ampara, Mr. Robert and commander of women-wing Nilavini, leading the LTTE members who made the journey to Batticaloa to take part in the annual Heroes' Day celebration which falls on 27 November, sources said.

Seventy male and 115 female soldiers travelled in seven busses from Vanni starting at 7.20am.

The LTTE group was escorted by Sri Lanka Army (SLA)

soldiers from Omanthai to Karuththapaalam (Black Bridge) in Chenkaladi from where the group travelled to their destination inside the LTTE controlled area.

Sources said that this is the same group that travelled from Batticaloa to Vanni in September of this year.

Held for telecom racket

Kolkata, 11 Nov - : Ferdinand Srikant Krishnamurthy, 32, a Sri Lankan with valid visa and passport, has been arrested by the Gariahat police for allegedly setting up a clandestine communications network. He has been remanded in police custody till November 16. His associate, also from Sri Lanka, is absconding.

About two weeks ago, Ferdinand, an IT professional from Colombo, rented a second-floor flat of a three-storeyed house on 2/2 Ballygunge Place (East) for a monthly rent of Rs 15,000, said T K Basu, OC, Gariahat Police Station.

They had set up a dish antenna to provide ISD facilities to their customers. They used it to receive and transmit ISD calls bypassing VSNL.

As a result, the government incurred loss of revenue, said B Bhattacharya, assistant commissioner, (south). Ferdinand was arrested on the basis of a VSNL complaint. Police are also probing whether they were engaged in espionage or had links with terrorists. Sources said two Israelis associated with the duo had left the city a few days ago. (Times of India News Service)

Committee to safeguard Muslim rights

November 11 - As part of the agreement between the Prime Minister and dissident SLMC MPs the Interior Ministry on 11 November appointed a top level committee to recommend ways of ensuring the security and right of Muslims in the North East. The high-level committee will report within a month proposing an effective mechanism to safeguard the identity and vital interest of the Muslim Community.

The Committee headed by Ministry Secretary M.N.Junaid will include Police chief T.E.Anandarajah and STF chief Nimal Gunatilleke, with DIG Indra de Silva as Secretary.

The terms of reference of the Committee are:

- * to look into the Security Measures in the Muslim areas in the North and the East and to suggest law enforcement, *
- to bring about a rapport with the other communities in the area, to establish and bring about a dialogue with the Police, the STF, the Armed Forces and the Tamil Community in the area,
- * to establish the identity and safeguard vital interests of the Muslim Community in the area,
- * to recommend measures to the Government to avoid lapses that occurred in the previous negotiations with other communities and institutions where Muslims had to undergo hardships and suffering.

The Committee will essentially look into the area linked to the demands and grievances by the nine dissident SLMC MPs who boycotted Parliament for a month until Premier Ranil Wickremesinghe gave them firm assurances.

SU opposes de-mining treaty

November 12 - Sihala Urumaya yesterday strongly objected to the government's move to sign the Ottawa Convention on de-mining. In a media release, the party's Deputy Secretary Udaya Gammanpila charged that it is suicidal for Sri Lanka to sign the treaty.

"Prof. G. L. Peiris has recently revealed that the Ottawa treaty on de-mining is to take centre stage at the Oslo talks. This is sheer intellectual dishonesty. It is in reality a convention on prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and their distribution," the release

said.

SU said that if Sri Lanka becomes a signatory to this convention, the country will never be able to secure its Army, Navy, Air Force and STF camps in the North and East.

"As long as the LTTE, a terrorist organisation headed by a convicted mass murderer evading arrest, is not going to be bound by any convention or treaty, it should never be allowed to materialize. All such discussions detrimental to the security and defence of Sri Lanka should be prevented by the people at any cost," the release further said.

Hakeem protest over LTTE 'Police' & 'Courts'

November 11 - The setting up of LTTE 'police stations' and 'courts of law' in the Eastern sector has perturbed the Muslims in the East forcing SLMC leader Rauff Hakeem to write to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on 11 November.

The LTTE over the past few days have opened 'Tamil Eelam Police Stations' in Palugamam, Batticaloa and Ampara districts and at Sampen in the Trincomalee district.

Minister Rauff Hakeem yesterday expressing shock at the developments urged Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe to address the issue urgently.

A news release headed "Hakeem expresses concern over LTTE Police, judiciary set-up in the East" issued by he SLMC stated: "Following LTTE's activities of setting up police stations and expanding their judicial administration in the Eastern Province, Leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress and Minister of Port Development, Shipping, Eastern Development and Muslim Religious Affairs Rauff Hakeem has called for urgent and intense need for discussion on these issues at the peace talks, in a letter to the Prime Minister today.

"In his letter, he has expressed deep concern over handling law and order and protecting judicial rights of the Muslims, in the East, given the present emerging scenario in the province. The minister has also communicated the matter over the telephone and also followed up with a letter to the Ambassador of Norway Jon Westborg.

Minister Hakeem will also write to LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran on the issue."

NUA seeks MoU seal on Muslim rights

November 13 - The National Unity Alliance appealed to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe that the written assurances he gave to the dissident SLMC MPs be included as an annexure to the ceasefire agreement between the government and the LTTE.

"The written undertaking by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe to the boycotting SLMC MPs has no significance or validity in the current context unless it is incorporated in the MOU as an annexure or a supplementary to it," National Unity Alliance Spokesman Abul Kalaam said. "Then only will it be binding to the parties to the MOU namely, the government and the LTTE. Otherwise it will be just another piece of paper like the joint statement signed by Rauff Hakeem and LTTE leader Prabhakaran some months back."

Mr. Kalaam, the former national organiser and director of legal and constitutional affairs of the SLMC while welcoming the Prime Minister's promise to safeguard the Muslim interests, said this was the usual practice by any Prime Minister when some of his MPs boycott parliament on some issues concerning them. To satisfy these MPs and to ensure their presence in Parliament during the budget session the Premier has given this promise in writing on the MPs request. "This letter has no legal binding force or effect in the implementation process of the MOU or the peace talks arising from the MOU unless and until the MPs demands and the Premier's reply to the de-

mands are incorporated in the MOU as an annexure or supplementary.

"If the boycotting MPs are serious in their demands they must insist that the Premier, who signed the MOU totally disregarding the Muslim factor to incorporate these two documents in the MOU and if the Premier is genuine in his promise he has to accede to this request and ensure that it is done in the best interest of North East Muslims and Sinhalese. The SLMC leader who participated in the peace talks also has to make sure of this," Mr. Kalaam added.

More Lankan soldiers learning Tamil

November 12 - Hundred Sri Lanka Army men were awarded certificates on 11 November after having completed the Tamil Language course conducted by the Sri Lanka Army. It was the 14th Tamil Language course conducted by the Army as part of its training programmes on linguistic capabilities. A release from the Army stated that over two thousand (2000) Army officers and other rankers have been given training in Tamil language up to now. The statement added that Minister of Justice W.J.M Lokubandara who was the chief guest at the presentation hailed the move by the Sri Lanka Army to teach Tamil to its Officers and Other Ranks.

US briefed on Govt. and LTTE peace talks

November 12 - After Minister Milinda Moragoda briefed the US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage on the Sri Lankan peace process, he said the United States Government was pleased with the progress that had been made at the recently concluded round of talks between the Sri Lanka Government and the LTTE. He had reiterated strong US support for it. This assurance was given by Mr. Armitage to Minister for Economic Reform, Science and Technology Milinda Moragoda at the State Department.

Mr. Moragoda was in Washington as part of the ongoing process to keep the US Government briefed on developments concerning the peace process. They discussed the outcome of the second session of the talks which concluded in Bangkok on November 3rd and particularly focused on the meeting to be held in Oslo on November 25th, aimed at mobilizing financial support for immediate humanitarian and rehabilitation action in the North and East.

Mr. Armitage had said he would be personally leading the US delegation to this meeting and that the US was committed to continue support for these vital objectives through projects that would yield an immediate impact. He had expressed the hope that the negotiating process would lead to a permanent end to the Sri Lankan conflict based on the principles of democracy and respect for human rights, while maintaining the country's territorial integrity.

The discussion also focused on the role of the US in providing development assistance for the rest of Sri Lanka. The comprehensive donor conference for this purpose is scheduled to be held in Tokyo early next year. The possible role that the US can play with regard to the Youth Corp and the E-Lanka initiative was also discussed. Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca and James Andrew Bever of USAID were associated at this meeting.

Indian govt. refuses to attend Oslo talks

12 November - Norwegian Foreign Minister Petersen visited New Delhi on 12 November following information that the Indian government will not participate in the forthcoming talks at Oslo among donor countries to discuss development assistance in respect of the reconstruction of the war-torn northeast of Sri Lanka. The Indian government had declined to attend the

talks despite persuasions made by the Norwegian Foreign Minister. This informed sources said would be a severe setback to the peace process. Earlier Indian reports said that the visit was in connection with the Kashmir issue but later it was revealed that it was in connection with the Indian government's refusal to participate in the Oslo talks. The possible presence of LTTE representatives at the talks might have been the reason for New Delhi's refusal to participate at the Oslo talks, commentators speculated.

Fresh water crisis looms large over Jaffna

November 12 - Jaffna is running out of drinking water because its underground fresh water sources are getting polluted rapidly, said a German expert in the northern town. Mr. H. Karft, the German expert, was speaking at the regional office of the GTZ, a German NGO, about the drinking water crisis that Jaffna will have to face if adequate measures are not taken to arrest pollution of the underground water sources of the peninsula.

The Commissioner of the Jaffna Municipal Council and the Medical Officer of Health for the northern district were among those who were present for the discussion with Mr. Karft.

The German expert said that seepage from the significantly large amount of exploded and unexploded ordnance, ammunition, land mines, explosives etc., that have accumulated in the Jaffna soil over the years is polluting underground water sources in the peninsula. Indiscriminate burial or decay of bodies near water sources has also contributed their share to the contamination, according to him.

In some areas a thin film of oil is found on fresh drinking water in wells due to careless disposal of waste oil and fuel. Fresh water sources near the Jaffna town are being rapidly polluted due to indiscriminate garbage dumping practices of the Jaffna Hospital and Municipal Council, he said.

Garbage and refuse from the thousand bed Jaffna Teaching Hospital is dumped near the old CeyNor building in Gurunagar, a coastal suburb of the northern town. The Jaffna Municipal Council too dumps garbage here, leading to severe pollution of fresh water sources below the surface in the environs of this densely populated suburb, Mr. Karft said. He said he had observed a significant rise in the ammonium and nitrogen content in the soil in recent times in the Tinnevely area largely due to dumping and decay of agricultural wastes. Both are potent pollutants of underground fresh water sources. A fresh water stream in the island of Delft is turning saline because it is flowing into the sea without proper diversion to collect and utilise its water, he observed.

The problem of Jaffna's dwindling fresh water sources should be addressed within 10-12 years before rapid commercialisation starts to impede the effort in order to avert the crisis, according to him.

JVP offices smashed up-set on fire

November 13 - Two JVP offices in Maharagama and Pannipitiya, a few miles from Colombo, was smashed up by a yet unidentified gang on 12 November in the course of which two party members injured. The JVP accused the government of trying to violently suppress it and sabotage today's convention to commemorate its past dead leaders.

JVP parliamentarian Sunil Handunnetti told the press that they believed the attacks were carried out by UNP-sponsored thugs. The MP said they had found the motorcycles apparently used by the attackers and handed it over to the Maharagama police but he believed political influence was being used to get the motorcycle released and cover up the probe. Mr. Handunnetti said cut-outs and other material for today's convention had also been smashed in other parts of Maharagama and Pannipitiya.

After smashing up two JVP offices at Maharagama and Pannipitiya, the gang had gained entry into the JVP printing press and office at Talangama and set fire to the building on the same night.

OIC Talangama police Amit Guneratne said that at about 2.30 a.m. over 60 persons had come in ten double cabs and a lorry to attack the JVP office and printing press and subsequently set it on fire. Nearly 20 people who were working at the time had fled to save their lives.

At a news conference Propaganda Secretary Wimal Weerawansa and others charged that the government was trying to sabotage the convention and suppress the JVP because it stood strong against what it saw as a treacherous attempt to sell part of the country to the LTTE.

SLMC rebels end boycott

November 13 - SLMC rebel group leader Minister A. L. M. Athaulla ending its parliament boycott said that it was legitimate to demand a separate unit for Muslims in the East if the North and the East is merged by any solution to the North-East problem.

Minister Noordeen Mashoor, Depute Minister Abdul Cader, Rishard Badiudeen and M. B. A. Azeez attended parliament this morning to the applause from government benches. Minister Athaulla said that Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe had accepted the five points raised by the group's and hoped that he would keep his word. He said that the group was not against the peace process but that it should clearly know what the fate of the Eastern Muslims would be at the final settlement.

Delving into history he said that the Eastern Muslim factor had been completely ignored in the Indo-Lanka agreement and a repetition of that should be prevented. He also appreciated all political parties including the PA and the JVP for recognising the problems of the Eastern province Muslims.

The rebel group met Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on 11 November where a final decision was reached on ending its parliament boycott.

JVP commemorates its dead

November 13 - The Janata Vimukthi Peramuna, the third largest party in Sri Lanka's Parliament, today commemorated in Colombo its founder leader Mr. Rohana Wijeweera and party cadres who were killed by the Sri Lankan armed forces during two unsuccessful but bloody insurrections in 1971 and 1988-89 to capture state power.

The convention and commemoration was held at the large Sugathadasa indoor stadium in Colombo. More than a thousand full time party cadres took part in the event.

Rohana Wijeweera and other leaders of the JVP were captured by the Sri Lanka army and summarily executed on the night of 13 November 1989. The party also held its fourth national convention on the occasion amidst charges and fears that it is preparing for another insurrection.

The JVP controls a growing number of key trade unions in Sri Lanka's export sector. It also dominates students' unions in all the universities in the Sinhala majority districts of the island, brooking no competitors.

The Sri Lanka Police and University authorities blame the JVP student front, the Inter University Students' Federation for rising violence in the seats of higher learning.

The terror tactics used by the JVP to keep its hold on Universities in the Sinhala majority regions of Sri Lanka were brought into focus recently when a young student opposed to ragging was brutally beaten to death recently in the University of Sri Jayawardenapura allegedly by undergraduates belonging

to the JVP backed Inter-University Student Federation. Several colleagues of the murdered undergraduate were also injured in the attack. The University remains closed under special Police guard following the murder.

Dangerous scenario emerging - JVP

November 13 - The JVP has condemned the government's continuing dealings with the LTTE, even in the face of a 200 year prison sentence imposed on its leader Velupillai Prabhakaran by the Colombo High Court.

JVP parliamentary group leader Wimal Weerawansa said on 12 November that LTTE theoretician Anton Balasingham had criticised the court ruling even with the government Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris beside him. "This is a very serious situation. We must also remember that our friendly neighbour India has imposed a death sentence on him for the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. Also India has said that its demand for Prabhakaran's extradition stands, despite what happens in Sri Lanka," he said.

"The government is dismantling high security zones at the behest of the LTTE and removing camps. It also turns a blind eye to the LTTE's setting up of illegal Eelam police in Trincomalee and Batticaloa. Three such stations were set up in the last fortnight," he said.

He warned of government moves to grant legitimacy to the LTTE with the opportunity to be an equal partner in the process to raise foreign aid. "It has been announced that Sri Lanka will be represented at the Oslo donor conference by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and LTTE theoretician Anton Balasingham. Is the government trying to show the world that a separate LTTE rule has been officially set up? And also that the PM and Balasingham should attend the donor forum to raise funds for the separate LTTE unit and Sri Lanka?" he said. Speaking of the implication of this action on the law of the country, he asked whether peace was to grant all demands of the LTTE disregarding the law and constitution of the country.

He described the emerging scenario as a very dangerous one, where the law and constitution of the country would be negated, with the certainty that a Tamil Eelam state would be set up in one third of the country. "Come together to defeat this danger," he urged MPs, ministers and the public.

'Tiger leader to appeal against sentence' - MP

November 13 - The LTTE will appeal against the Colombo High Court judgment sentencing its leader Velupillai Prabhakaran to 200 years jail, a TNA MP told Parliament yesterday amidst scenes of pandemonium and the unprecedented expulsion of a minister.

Jaffna district parliamentarian N. Raviraj made the announcement after the JVP brought up the matter causing a one hour rumpus and a 20 minute suspension of sittings, with Speaker Joseph Michael Perera ordering Minister T. Maheswaran and parliamentarian Olitha Premathiratne out of the Chamber for continually disrupting sittings.

Mr. Raviraj said the JVP had violated standing orders by bringing up a matter that was before a court of law.

"I say with responsibility that there is going to be an appeal within the specified 30 days. Thus the case is still open," he said. The MP said the process of consulting lawyers and obtaining documents for the appeal was going on.

At this point Opposition parliamentarian Jeyaraj Fernandopulle said a matter raised in parliament during the period between the judgment and an appeal could not be considered sub judice. He said that was the interpretation of parliament's Acting Secretary General Priyani Wijesekera.

But Chief Government Whip Mahinda Samarasinghe hit

back saying the UNF was not interested in some official's interpretation of the Standing Orders. He said his view was that if an appeal was coming a debate should not have been allowed.

When Mr. Fernandopulle raised a query on the validity of Mr. Raviraj's statement the Speaker said if the statement was not true the opposition could move a motion against the MP. At this point Justice Minister W.J.M. Lokubandara said that as a citizen of the country Velupillai Prabhakaran had the right to appeal against such a sentence. Till the appeal is heard any ruling is not necessarily final, he said. "What is wrong if an armed group now comes to the democratic process?" the minister asked. He told the Speaker that the JVP should not be allowed to use Parliament to disrupt the peace process.

JVP parliamentary group leader Wimal Weerawansa charged that the LTTE was using the peace process to remove the army camps in the high security zones of the North and the East. He claimed the LTTE was also setting up Eelam police stations in the government-controlled areas like Batticaloa and Trincomalee. He accused the government of giving legitimacy to a terrorist group to go before the international community and ask for funds.

"Is the Prime Minister going to hold the hands of the spokesman of the LTTE leader who is under an open arrest warrant by this country's judiciary? What happens to the country's law and order in this state? "Does peace mean bowing to every demand of the LTTE irrespective of even a court ruling?" he asked.

Commissions' composition queried

November 14 - Minister Arumugam Thondaman in a letter to Premier Ranil Wickremesinghe has complained that according to newspaper reports the composition of Independent Commissions appointed relating to the Police, Judiciary, Election and Public Services do not conform to the intent and the spirit of the 17th Amendment.

He had pointed out that while the 17th Amendment envisages the Independent Commissions to reflect the ethnic composition of the country, it appears that this criteria has not been fulfilled.

The Minister who is also the CWC leader in his letter had requested the Prime Minister to recall the lists of nominees recommended and ensure a fair representation in keeping with the Constitutional provisions.

In his letter Mr. Thondaman stated : "you are aware of the representations made by us during the debate on the 17th amendment to the constitution for fair representation of all ethnic groups in the constitutional council which was accepted by all parties in Parliament by agreeing to the amendment moved by us to include three members of the minority communities namely Sri Lanka Tamil, Muslims and persons of Indian origin and laying down procedures for members of Parliament from these three communities to select the three representatives to represent the three communities. This deviation from the intent and spirit of the 17th Amendment, we feel is unfortunate and negates the motive of the 17th Amendment which seeks to make the highest bodies in the country not only fair but also seem so."

Germany help for displaced persons

November 14 - The German government which welcomes the encouraging commencement of the high level peace talks between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE by providing funds amounting to Euro 415,000 (Rs. 39 million) to assist the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) will enhance the funding further with Euro 240,000 (Rs. 22.5 million). This is in order to continue the support towards the IDP-Programme as a result of which 2357 families returning to their villages in

Vavuniya, Mannar and Kilinochchi in the Vanni District will be the beneficiaries.

The emphasis of this programme will lie on the resumption and intensification of agricultural production in these areas bringing relief to the returning families and consolidating their living standards. The programme will be implemented by the German NGO Welthungerhilfe (German Agro Action) in collaboration with the "Seva Lanka Foundation". (German Embassy Press Release)

No opposition participation in peace talks

November 14 - The government responding to President Chandrika Kumaratunga's proposal to set up a National Committee for Ethnic Reconciliation and Sustainable Peace that the opposition would not have a participatory or decision making role in the peace talks with the LTTE but will be briefed about the discussions on a regular basis.

Cabinet spokesman and Constitutional Affairs Minister G.L.Peiris told press briefing on 14 November that the Liam Fox agreement to which both the UNP and PA were signatories did not provide for direct opposition participation in talks with the LTTE but requires the ruling party to brief the opposition on the outcome of talks.

However he emphasised that this did not mean the opposition was being shut out because any decision reached at peace talks with the LTTE would eventually have to be put before parliament and the people for their approval.

Asked if the President has the legal authority to appoint a National Committee for Ethnic Reconciliation and other Committees which she announced on Tuesday in her speech to the nation marking her eight years in office, Peiris said he prefers not to comment on such matters.

However he did point out that a decision making role was not provided to the then Opposition when the last People's Alliance government engaged the LTTE in talks. "If the peace talks between the present Government and LTTE had commenced during the rule of the former Peoples Alliance government it would have been restricted to those two parties just like it is now. This is exactly what the Liam Fox agreement signifies. As such I cannot see the relation between the Presidents proposal and the Thailand peace talks," Peiris said.

In an obvious reference to the President's opposition to the LTTE being granted an Interim Administration before core issues are addressed and decommissioning of arms takes place, Peiris said that the LTTE dropped its interim administration demand during the second round of peace talks in Thailand earlier this month.

LTTE call to join Eelam Police

November 14 - Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have requested men and women who satisfy requirements published by the LTTE Police Personnel department to apply to fill vacant positions in its Police Force. This request follows the opening of several Tamil Eelam Police stations in the northeast of the island in recent times.

For the position of deputy Police inspector, applicants must have passed General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level (AL), equivalent to Grade-12 examinations, aged 18-30 and height at least 5'6". The expected remuneration is Rs5000 per month, the LTTE communiqué said.

For the position of Police officer, the applicant must have passed GCE Ordinary Level (OL), equivalent to Grade-10 examinations, aged 18-30, and a height of at least 5'6". For the successful candidates accommodation, transport and training will be provided, the communiqué further said.

The Personnel branch of the LTTE Police department re-

quested potential applicants to contact the nearest political office or the LTTE police stations.

Lord Naseby on the peace process

November 14 - The LTTE seem to be sincere so far and they have accepted that achieving Eelam is not viable. However it would help if the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran made a statement to that effect, said Member of House of Lords and Conservative Party member the Rt. Hon. Lord Naseby PC, speaking to a Colombo newspaper on 14 November.

Lord Naseby said, "The donor money is dependent on the progress of the peace process. The LTTE should give up on terrorism, which means giving up arms. They should not be having a separate army and a navy. They must be integrated to the Sri Lankan army and the navy, stop recruiting child soldiers. That is crucial."

He said that UK should support to restore either the schools or hospitals in the North, which is already devastated, and that he would put pressure on Britain's the Minister of Overseas Development Claire Short to increase aid to Sri Lanka.

Speaking of the de-proscription of the LTTE, Lord Naseby said that the LTTE would not be de-proscribed in the UK until they see clear evidence in full and proper peace is achieved in Sri Lanka.

Naseby who met Premier Wickremesinghe described him as very sincere and hopeful and a leader who is committed to achieving peace in Sri Lanka. He said that ordinary people believed in the Premier. Describing his meeting with the President Kumaratunga Lord Naseby said, "The President has some concerns about the real strength of LTTE's commitment and if they have given up terrorism. They are legitimate worries." He added that former Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar was more skeptical than the President. Naseby said, "It is my feeling. He is concerned about the pressure LTTE is trying to bring towards foreign governments such as UK and Australia to de-proscribe them. Kadirgamar had lot to do with several countries proscribing the LTTE and stopping funds coming to them. So those concerns are valid."

However, the British parliamentarian noted that there was a clear difference between the PA and the UNP. "The opposition wants to see some progress in the core issues even though the President and the PM see progress in the process. But, at the end of the day both Ranil and Prabhakaran should sit together and discuss the matters."

He also met with the leader of opposition, service commanders and other senior politicians. He also spent a day in Jaffna to get first hand information on the situation there. He also met ministers G. L. Pieris and Milinda Moragoda.

Lord Naseby considered as a friend of Sri Lanka is the founder of the British/Sri Lanka Parliament group in 1974.

UNF second budget passed

November 15 - The second budget of the United National Front government was passed today in parliament by a majority of thirty-six votes. One hundred twenty nine parliamentarians voted for the budget and ninety three voted against. Parliamentarians of the main opposition People's Alliance (PA), Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the National Unity Alliance (NUA), the breakaway group of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, voted against the budget.

The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP) and Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) voted with the government.

"The voting has proved beyond doubt the stability of the government now it enjoys," claimed Minister of Constitutional Affairs Professor G.L. Peiris following the adoption of the budget

in the second reading.

He said some mischievous elements created an impression in the country that the present government has no majority in parliament. This canard had been spread to weaken the peace process now being taken forward vigorously. The adoption of the budget with a majority 36 votes has put an end to all speculation about the stability of the government and the country. The stability of the country has been strengthened with the dawn of peace following the signing of a ceasefire agreement between the UNF government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

Ratwatte released on bail

November 15 - The Colombo High Court today allowed all the fifteen accused in the Udathalawinne murder case in a sum of five hundred thousand rupees personal bail and fixed the trial for January 20 next year. The accused included the former Deputy Defence Minister General Anurudha Ratwatte and his two sons Lohan and Chanuka.

The case was taken up for inquiry before a three-member bench of the Colombo High Court specially appointed to conduct the trial. The bench comprises Mr. Eric Basanayake (Chairman), Mr. Sunil Rajapakse and Mr. Deepal Wijesundera.

The Attorney General has indicted the accused for committing the murder of ten Muslims youths on the last general election day - December 5, 2001 - at Udathalawinne in the Kandy district. The accused have been charged on seventy-two counts.

Children suffer in silence

An independant survey carried out by Rev. Fr. S. Guy de Fontgalland of the Leo Marga Ashram says that according to reports from the year 2000, there are a total of 339,408 plantation children. Nearly 80,000 of them are under five years of age and 180,000 are schooling.

Around 15,000 of the plantation children suffer from disabilities leaving a balance of 64,408 children at home. Another problem about these children is the health issues of the very young children who are in age groups between three to 36 months. Studies by UNICEF show that there are more than 24,000 infants under the age of one, 96,000 between the ages of one and four and 24,000 between the ages of five to 14. According to UNICEF Project Officer-Child Development Abhayan Rana, studies have shown that in 2000 the percentage of children who are stunt was 31.9%.

The percentages of children who are underweight are 43.2% in the plantation sector and 10% in other rural areas. As seen by these preliminary figures the situation is getting better but it needs more improvement, according to a UNICEF report. When it comes to access to clean drinking water, 67% of the families in the estate areas get their water from rivers and streams. Regarding immunisation in the year 2000, 86.1% of plantation children received immunisation when compared to 94.4% of children from other rural areas. For the year 2001 there are now approximately 339,408 children under the age of 18 living in estates. It is also reported that there are 26,037 children engaged in economic activity and out of this total 52% are below the age of 15. They are engaged in economic activity while attending school or not attending an education institute. Of the 234,618 children engaged in economic activity and not attending any education institute, 11% are under the age of 15. 69,064 children are reportedly engaged in economic activity and of this 30,533 children are living away from home and 9% of the children are reported to be idling and also living away from the family. □

Joint Task Force: Prelude to an Interim Council?

Oswald B. Firth

OMI, Director, Centre for Society and Religion

"In the name of peace, I cannot blindly agree to everything"

- President Chandrika Kumaratunge.

Pretensions apart, one could possibly say the same thing of the proposed Joint Task Force (JTF), the latest 'peace concept' currently in vogue.

The Joint Task Force (JTF), which is today the talk of the town, did figure prominently on the second round of peace talks recently concluded in Thailand between the government and the LTTE. What has caught the public eye are the Terms of Reference of the draft JTF, a set of guidelines in small print, which turns out to be a clearly confused oxymoron.

One is at a loss to know whether the JTF is a legal entity flummoxed between the Ceasefire Agreement and the much-vaunted Interim Administrative Council, a functional arrangement that has been temporarily shelved in some bureaucratic pigeon hole or other due, perhaps, to intimidating political pressure from certain quarters that bear the dubious sobriquet: "The Peace Spoilers".

Or, is the JTF a subterfuge, an interim to the Interim Administrative Council, which carries with it loaded prevarications that hang between the obtuse and the obscure as to its legitimacy.

The communication gap between the government's Peace Secretariat and civil society, or whatever is left of it, on this subject needs to be bridged, more sooner than later, lest any delay could undermine the legitimacy and relevance of this innovative administrative mechanism.

Notwithstanding the concurrence of the LTTE to the Terms of Reference of the JTF, there are certain commendable elements in the draft text that deserve to be highlighted. While the primary objective of the JTF may appear to be political, equating the LTTE with the government, the agreement binds both the government and the LTTE in a joint effort to address the sad consequences of the war.

It can also serve as a devise to thwart any attempt to transform the peace process into a protracted rhetorical exercise.

Awkward partnership

A synergy of political forces and economic adversities may have combined to result eventually in a mutually agreed ceasefire that has stood the test of 250 days. The Ceasefire Agreement has not been a panacea for all ills when one reflects on the uncontrollable tensions and smouldering frictions that burst into flames of violence in the East.

Nevertheless, the Ceasefire Agreement paved the way to halt hostilities on both sides in the theatre of war and create a modicum of trust to engage the two protagonists of the war in an all-important dialogue of rehabilitation, reconstruction and reconciliation.

While both the government and the LTTE are adepts in delivering on the first two humanitarian concerns, reconciliation is an area where the NGO sector and spiritual leaders could make a more pronounced contribution that could leave a more incisive impact.

The JTF is conceived as a "partnership between the government (GOSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)". No "partnership" is meaningful unless the contracting parties consider each other as being of equal status. Whether the Muslims would have any part to play in this "partnership" is a moot point, even though they constitute around 30 per cent of the population in the East.

The text maintains that "the JTF should strive to be a flexible and adaptable mechanism for improving the living standards of the population in the Northern and Eastern Provinces of the country". A rather mythical expectation garnished with a touch of hyperbole when one considers the shabby treatment meted out to the Muslims in recent times at Valachchenai, for example.

Muslim factor

Such incidents, far from enhancing the quality of life of the Muslims, have only succeeded in sowing the seeds of

discontent, frustration and violence. These sentiments are now being exploited by bankrupt political parties to disseminate hatred among the Sinhalese and Muslims in certain enclaves of Colombo that were hitherto peaceful. The situation becomes even more compounded by the fact that the LTTE considers both the North and the East as the 'Traditional Homeland' of the Tamils.

Under such a dispensation, would the Sinhalese, Muslims and even the Tamils in the East consider the LTTE as their sole representatives responsible for improving the living conditions of these communities? Perhaps, answers to these concerns may have been available if the Interim Administrative Council had been set up and its parameters determined to accommodate the political aspirations and the legitimate grievances of all communities.

Leaving everything entirely in the hands of 'goodwill' alone will not do. One cannot concede the rights of people to be blatantly violated under the guise of demonstrating gestures of 'goodwill' towards one's opponent. This is precisely why it is vital that 'fundamental rights issues' become an integral part of the dialogue in the process of negotiations.

Prodigious by-pass

The proposed Interim Administration or the JTF for that matter has neither the approval of the President nor the assent of Parliament.

"Co-habitation" has become a parody of errors, and there appears to be an endemic rivalry between the President and Prime Minister. Under these circumstances, there is little hope that the President would approve of a JTF that recognizes the LTTE with equal status to "establish and administer a fund" (4.3.8).

One could only infer from her past behaviour that she would make every effort to disrupt the peace process and sabotage the peace initiative, where it would be doomed to fail.

Politics may be the art of the possible, but it is equally the struggle for power where there are no permanent enemies or permanent friends.

If the peace process ever succeeds, the future of the Opposition would be sealed for many years to come. Given this scenario, it stands to reason to have the JTF function under the purview of the Prime Minister's office where it would gain credibility, but more because it could contain any opposition from that vantage

(continued on page 41)

War, peace & human rights

Dr. Radhika Coomaraswamy has been selected by the Constitutional Council to chair the Independent Commission on Human Rights. The appointment has to be made by the President, along with those of other nominees to the independent commissions to be set up under the terms of the 17th amendment to the constitution. Dr. Coomaraswamy is Director of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Colombo, and holds the UN post of Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women. Edited excerpts from an interview with Lasanda Kurukulasuriya of the Daily Mirror (9.11.2002):

What has been gained by this truce? The positive aspects?

Firstly, the fact that nobody's getting killed. That's important. Also it has set in motion a people-to-people process, making space for a genuine reconciliation. It has also made possible a process of resolving conflict between the government and the LTTE, with Norwegian facilitation. This process has withstood quite a few jolts - giving a sense that it might be long lasting. I have problems with it - serious issues I would like to raise - but have hope that it will go on.

What are the issues?

The human rights violations in the East by the LTTE - forced conscription of children, abductions, extortion ... And in Jaffna some misbehaviour of the armed forces. There's no rule of law in those areas, and that's a serious issue.

Is the Agreement flawed, for leaving room for these abuses?

Most ceasefire agreements around the world are just that - ceasefire agreements. In that sense it's not that different. What you have in places like El Salvador, East Timor. They also have a human rights agreement with international monitoring. That we don't have. Many human rights groups are pushing for this. Neither side has taken that option. Both Ranil Wickremesinghe and G.L. Peiris have said that at the level of the Interim Administration they will ensure there are safeguards for human rights with some form of international monitoring.

Shouldn't there be provision for a surrender of weapons by the LTTE?

Ideally, that's good. But if you look at how conflicts actually evolve in many parts of the world, the surrender is only after the final peace. Otherwise, the argument is that if the Agreement doesn't take place, they are at a military disadvantage.

Is there enough discussion going on?

No, that I don't think is enough. I hope that when substantive negotiations begin - when they finally decide to set up a constitution ... that they follow the South African experience and have a re-

ally open consultation process, and involve civil society far more. At the moment it's just government and the LTTE. It's very important that it be broadened and everybody feels ownership ... and I hope that will happen soon.

Have the worst aspects of violations by security forces/police been brought under control with the withdrawal of emergency regulations and the 1994 amendments to the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA)?

I think since the peace process there have been very few cases under the PTA. ... There have been cases of torture in the South. A terrible case of torture/rape in the South that came to light. But I have not heard of any rape or torture cases relating to the North and East after the peace process. The issue however is PTA detainees. ... The release of detainees against whom there are no charges.

Is there a contradiction in the process itself - on the one hand we are told this is a scheme of devolution within the Constitution, under the Provincial Councils Act, but on the ground what we see is a total capitulation to the demands of one armed militant group ... that shows no sign of moving towards democratic processes. We see the LTTE trying to eradicate all opposition. With no sign of dismantling its "parallel administration."

In the ideal situation the writ of the Sri Lankan government would run in those areas. And people who violate human rights can be put in jail etc. But the truth of the matter is that it doesn't run. There's nothing that can be done about that de facto reality, in the short term. But what we have to ensure is, if an Interim Administration is set up, that there are three cardinal principles: ... First that it must be representative, and have all minority groups and political opinions of the North and the East in it. Especially minority ethnic groups. Secondly the democratic principle must be respected, and elections held as soon as possible. It shouldn't be something in lieu of elections, but something to set the stage for elec-

tions. Thirdly that there is a regime that protects human rights, with international monitoring. If these principles are set in place, we can say any de facto or interim administration is in the best interests of the people of the region. If they are not, there is the danger that you mention.

Looking at the long-term picture, beyond the Thailand peace talks, does this peace initiative hold out hope that Tamil aspirations will be met?

Yeah ... the Tamils - at least the political leaders, I don't know about "all Tamils" - see themselves as a nation with a right to self-determination. The Sinhalese see the Tamils as a minority who at most can ask for some form of rights. These are two basically different world views that are meeting in Thailand. But ... in both the notion of self determination which is the Tamil framework, and the notion of the right of minorities which is the Sri Lankan government framework - both of them are talking of internal self determination, the right to autonomy ... so there's the sense that some form of autonomous regime within nation states can meet the aspirations of ethnic groups.

That's more and more the accepted thinking. Within that at Thailand if they can come up with some sort of autonomy regime, it should meet the best aspirations that Tamils have been fighting for since 1958.

What has happened to moderate Tamil opinion? Is it a thing of the past, or is it suppressed through fear?

I think moderate Tamil opinion has been killed off, mainly by the LTTE. People who articulated it. But also I think the Tamil community is very confused ... as a result of this. And I think, one part of it sees the LTTE as protecting its interests, and another part of it resists LTTE's anti-human rights and dominating ways. So I think there is in the Tamil community this tension. Which is saying, yes, they protect our interests and they speak for us, but they are very authoritarian ... and resenting their oppressive ways. As a result they are silent, they don't know what to say. I think a lot of Tamil people are in this bind.

Have the Tigers lost the claim they make to being a people's organization?

They were never a people's organization. I think the LTTE is a military organization. The success of the peace process is whether you can transform them from a military organization to a political organization, which is people-centric.

What's the moderate Tamil position?

A moderate Tamil position would be for Federalism. For human rights, and a strong democratic process in the North and East. That I think is the voice that is lost - a democratic, pluralistic voice.

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We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Ravi Shankar, son of Dr. M. & Mrs Viji Ramanathan of 92 Hitchings Way, Reigate, Surrey RH2 8ER and Abirami, daughter of Mr. A. & Mrs Pathma Thangarasah of 14 Mayfields, Wembley Park, Middlesex HA9 9PS on 19th October 2002 at Allum Lane Community Center Hall, Elstree, Herts.

Nirmalan, son of Dr.S. & Mrs. Jegatheswarie Puvirajasingham of 76 Rating Lane, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA13 9LD and Vanmathy, daughter of Mr. K. & Mrs. Masilamani Rajalingam of 109 Imperial Drive, North Harrow, Middlesex HA2 7HW on 27th October 2002 at Clay Oven Banqueting Suite, Alperton, Wembley, Middlesex.

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A Dear Daughter

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

*A light from our household is gone,
A voice we loved is still;
A place is vacant in our home,
That never can be filled.*

*May the God of Love and Mercy,
Care for our loved one who has gone;
And bless with consolation,
Those left to carry on.*

*The happy hours we once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still;
But death has left a vacant place,
This world can never fill.*

*How dearly we loved you,
And prayed for your long and happy life,
But Sai just beckoned,
And we had to give.*

*Sai gave us the strength to hear it,
And courage to fight the blow,
What it has meant to lose you,
Sai alone will ever know.*

May you rest in peace at the Lotus Feet of our dear Sai,
Miss you and love you for ever.

Mum and Dad

To a dear sister

*We want to say so many things,
We don't know where to start ;
We only know that we miss you Chooty,
From the bottom of our hearts.*

*We treasure every memory,
With pride we speak your name,
We will always love and miss you,
In a world that's not the same.*

Love you always,

Aiya and Saloni

Fourth Anniversary Remembrance Miss Daisy Selvaranee Rasiah



In ever loving memory of
Miss Daisy Selvaranee Rasiah,
Retired teacher
of Veemankamam, Tellippallai
on the fourth anniversary
of her passing away
on the 10th of November 1998.

*Nothing loved is ever lost,
Memories last for ever.*

Affectionately remembered
by her sister

**Thevaranee
and all loved ones.**

64 Jessup Close, London SE18.

Mrs Chandra Ragupathy



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

Sadly missed and fondly
remembered as always

by
her loving husband
Ragupathy.

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The First Year Remembrance In Loving Memory of Gratian Nirmalanandan

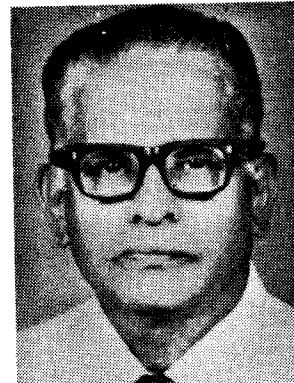


08.10.52 - 30.09.01

*The pain of parting is the price we pay
for love for the best and the most beautiful things
in the world cannot be seen nor touched
but felt in the heart and soul.*

Sadly Missed and Fondly Remembered by
His Loving Wife Chandra
Beloved Mamma, the Family and Friends.

In Ever Loving Memory of Our Dearest Appa



Richard Jeyarajasingam

Born: 20.11.1928 Called to Glory: 27.11.1990

*Though your parting twelve long years ago
Crushed our dreams and passions,
We rejoice that you returned with songs of joy
To the one that planned your mission.
We thank Him, our Lord for the gift of you
A father, that one could ever wish for.*

Fondly remembered by
Ranee and children

Forthcoming Events

**Dec 2 Pirathosam; Third Karthi-
gai Somavaaram**

**Dec 3 Amavasai; Feast of St.
Francis Xavier**

Dec 6 Feast of St. Nicholas

**Dec 7 Sathurthi; 7 p.m. Stand-
ing Committee of Tamil Speak-
ing People (SCOT) Christmas**

**Dinner-Dance at Ealing Town
Hall. Tel: 020 8904 6472/ 8759
7986; South London Tamil**

**Welfare Group (SLTWG) Chil-
dren's Christmas Celebrations
Tel: 020 8542 3285**

**Dec 8 Feast of The Immaculate
Conception of the Blessed Vir-
gin Mary**

**Dec 9 Shashti; Sri Vinayagar
Viratham ends; Fourth Karthi-
gai Somavaaram**

Dec 11 Thiruvembavai starts

**Dec 14 SLTWG Christmas Cel-
ebrations. Tel: 020 8542 3285;
Feast of St. John of the Cross**

**Dec 15 Vaikunda Eekathasi; 11
a.m. Srilanka Railway Past-
Employees Welfare Associa-
tion (UK) Christmas Celebra-
tions at Air Force Training Hall,**

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London SW19 (Nearest Tube
South Wimbledon). Tel: 020
8804 9647 (Hony. Treasurer,
Mr. P.Chellathurai)

Dec 17 Karthigai; Pirathosam

Dec 19 Fullmoon

Dec 20 Aaruthra Dharishanam

**Dec 21 SLTWG Drop in Tel:
020 8542 3285**

Dec 23 Sankadakara Sathurthi

Dec 25 Christmas Day

Dec 26 Boxing Day

**Dec 28 Feast of the Holy Inno-
cents**

**Dec 29 Krishna Eekathasi;
Feast of the Holy Family**

Dec 31 Feast of St. Sylvester.

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**Dec 1 6p.m. The Bhavan & Sri-
shti present Vaachikam - Bh-
arata Natyam set in the Ghazal
Way by Nina Rajarani**

**Dec 7 3 - 4 p.m. Talk by Prof.
R. Ananta Murty on "On being
an Indian Writer". All Welcome.**

**Dec 8 6 p.m. Akshara - The
Divine Couple, An Indo-Euro-
pean Contemporary ballet**

**Dec 19 6.30 p.m. Christmas
Celebrations - Carol singing,
cultural programme and festive
snacks. All cordially invited.**

**The Sri Lanka
Railway Past Employees
Welfare Association - UK
will hold its Annual Christmas
Celebrations on Sunday, 15th
December 2002 at 11 a.m. at
No 18F Squadron Air Training
Hall, 192 Merton Road, Wim-
bledon (near South Wimble-
don Tube Station).
Hony Secretary**

Wedding



Parosha, daughter of **Drs. Raj and Qudsia Chandran** married **Clive**, son of **Stan and Barbara Daykin** at Kelham Hall, Nottinghamshire. Dr. Chandran is a former Commissioner for Racial Equality for UK and Mr. Daykin is a retired Superintendent of Police, Nottinghamshire Constabulary.

Over 500 guests were present and the couple left by helicopter to Heathrow to fly to Sri Lanka for their honeymoon. Parosha is a Human Rights Barrister and Clive is a Chartered Accountant and they both practise in London.

My Sorrowing Motherland

*Many a generation sought domain,
In my heart to stay,
And now I'm stateless, in the spot remain;
But they've gone far away.*

*I shared in lives, sorrows and happiness
In my heart to stay,
And recall in my loneliness,
Although they are far away.*

*I've borne their burdens and possession,
In my heart to stay,
'Am now in ruins, through oppression,
They know not, being far away.*

*I am robbed of my landmarks and boundary
An open heart I stay,
No doors, no windows, for security,
They'll dream not being far away.*

*Spiritless fossils and cadavers,
Studded in my heart to stay,
I yearn to see them alive and steer,
To take me lively and gay.*

*I am wartorn, lost my life and glamour,
Empty, my heart, doth stay,
I pine to regain my look, Oh Redeemer!!
Bring Peace bring back them, gone far away.*

Composed by
Pathma Selvanayagam

Sunthar's Violin Arangetram

Sunthar Sivapathasundaram, a budding young musician in London, who has already had a successful flute arangetram in 2000, had a brilliant violin arangetram on the 25th of August at the Winston Churchill Hall.

Groomed by Guru Dr. Lakshmi Jayan, Sunthar held the appreciative audience spellbound from the start to finish. Starting with Sri Lalgudi Jayaraman's varnam in Kannada raga, Sunthar gave a brief introduction of Hamsadhvani and played the Ganesa kriti "Pahi Pahi" finishing it with an exhilarating swaraprastaram. Then came Thyagaraja's famous kriti "Na Jeevadhara" in Bilahari, followed by Papanasam Sivan's "Karpagamano-hara" in Malayamarutham with excellent raga alapana and kalpana swaram. "Enthanivinna" in Urmika and "Samikku Sari Evare" in Kedaragowli came next. Sunthar was in all his elements in the ragam-tanam-pallavi in Dharmavati ragam set to Kanda thriputa talam. Ragams taken for the swararagamalika were Kanada, Parvati and Revati. Parvati is a rare ragam derived from the 72nd Melakarta. The entire ragam-tanam-pallavi, especially the thrikalam was executed superbly by Sunthar.

The second part of the concert comprising lighter pieces was very relaxed and enjoyable. A rare Oothukkadu kriti, "Neelamalar" in Vasanta was very joyful. The ragamalika of 14 different Ranjani ragams was masterly. Annamacharya's "Bhavayami" in Yamuna Kalyani was followed by a very lilting javali - "Cheline netlu" which was a treat to the audience. Lalgudi's thillana in Mand ragam, which is a difficult one was handled brilliantly by Sunthar, thus proving his Lalgudi lineage. The mangalam was Dikshitar's Kamalamba Navavarnam in Sree Ragam.

On the whole Sunthar's concept of layam was excel-



lent, the raga alapanas were rich in traditional prayogams (phrases), and the kritis were full of pristine sangathis and ragabhavam maintaining the speciality of "Lalgudi Style" in which the violin imitates the words of the lyric (sahityam) like a voice.

The mridangam and ghatam support were given by the "Bangalore Brothers" Prakash and Prathap. They affectionately guided Sunthar throughout the concert with their excellent support. Prakash proved that his mastery on mridangam is equally meritorious as on the ghatam with which he usually thrills the London audience. The Tani Avartanam was beautifully rendered by the brothers and the audience enjoyed it very much.

The Chief Guest, Dr. P. V. Nath MBE from Newcastle fully appreciated Sunthar's achievement and the Guru's contribution, and gave Sunthar valuable advice for the future. The Guest of Honour, Sri Sami Dandapani of London Sivan Temple, gave an excellent speech in Tamil commenting on Sunthar's performance.

The parents, Chandra and Siva, deserve hearty congratulations for bringing out and nurturing the talents in their son. Sunthar, no doubt, has inborn talent for music and it has been properly groomed in the right channel by his parents and Guru. Well done Sunthar! May God Bless You.

Kala Rasika

SHIVA SHANKARI's Bharatha Natya Arangetram



Shiva Shankari daughter of Dr. and Mrs Shanmuganathan staged her graduation performance (Arangetram) in Bharatha Natyam at the Logan Hall, University of London on 5th October 2002. She is a disciple of Guru Smt. Gunavathy Shakespeare and was trained at the Shakespeare School of Oriental Dancing in the authentic Kalashetra Style.

Shiva Shankari opened her performance in the traditional manner with the Ganesha Vandanam, went on to an Alarippu & Jathiswaram and presented a Shabtham on God Murugan in ragamalikai (Tala misrachapu) The Varnam chosen was "Roopamu Joochi" (Thodi-Aadhi). Shiva Shankari performed to an original choreography of the Grand old Lady of Adayar Kalashetra none other than Smt Rukmani Amma herself. Such handing over of rare and specialised knowledge from a Doydon of Bharatha Natyam to Shiva Shankari was possible only because the Guru Smt Gunawati Shakespeare was privileged to be trained by "Amma" herself.

Shiva Shankari also presented a Patham in which she paid homage to Goddess Sarvamangaleswari of her Maternal Family Temple in Mayilani, Chunnam, Sri Lanka.

The Keerthanam "Yean Palli Kondeer lyah?" an evergreen favourite of dance teachers and viewers alike was performed very well by the young student and sung extremely well by the Vocalist. The main vocalist was Vidwan Gaanabhooshanam V.A. Aravindakshan a graduate of the Trivandrum Music College and tutored by

great Maestros like Semmankudiyar and Smt M.S.. Vidwan Balachandar of the Bhawan was on Miruthangam. The other accompanists were Shri Ganesh - Violin, Shri Pitchaiappah Gnanavarathan - Flute and Kumari Abirami Gnanasambandan - Veena.

Shiva Shankari's parents had chosen Smt Balasundhari Prathalingam as the Chief Guest. The Audience - most of whom were Sri Lankan professionals who lived in Colombo in the sixties gasped with excitement as Balasundhari - Colombo's Bharatha Natyam legend in the Nineteen sixties appeared on this London Stage. Sri. A. T. Moorthy (Former High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in London) & Dr. Ratnam Niththiyandan of the London Tamil Centre were also invited as Special Guests and presented their comments.

Shiva Shankari, currently a Bio Medical Undergrad, also devotes time to playing Piano, Veena, Speech & Drama. Several hundreds and hundreds of Tamil youngsters attend Bharatha Natyam Classes in our European cities. Of these only a few hundreds have their Arangetrams and if these young dancers continue their links with Bharatha Natyam after their arangetram, this divine art will not only bring them respect and recognition but would also give them inner strength and everlasting spiritual satisfaction.

Wimal Sockanathan

(Continued from page 36)

point. This would ensure that the project has nationwide political support even though it may not enjoy legal status. Would the government be throwing the Sinhalese and Muslims living in the Eastern Province to the wolves, as the saying goes, by agreeing to the setting up of a JTF? Will the JTF be the harbinger of an Interim Administration at a later date, or are they capriciously one and the same?

Besides, one encounters stiff opposition to a merger of the North and East. Is there then a hidden agenda in setting up a JTF, which will eventually metamorphose into an Interim Administrative Council with the LTTE in a distinctly predominating position none could afford to question without incurring its wrath? Will this then be a prelude to a 'separate state'?

Or, will it conform to the basic norms

Queen's Medal for Sangarapillai



Mr. E. Sangarapillai, who hails from Atchuvely, Sri Lanka has been honoured with the Queen's Golden Jubilee Commemoration Medal by the Governor General of Canada in recognition of his services as a writer and community worker.

He is a prolific writer in English and Tamil and carrying the pen name "Godson" has won the Editor's Choice Award at a North American National Library of Poetry and has also been awarded the title International Poet of Merit by the International Society of Poetry with his name appearing with those of others in the Poetry Hall of Fame.

He represents the St. George's Manor Community at the Toronto Community Housing Council, organises Community Festivals and assists the sick and needy. Students of Universities and High Schools benefit from his assistance in the study of English and literature studies. He is a voluntary worker for Libraries, Hospitals and Children's Aid Societies.

of democratic governance that would genuinely reflect the hopes and aspirations of all the three major communities in the North/East, for which the electoral process will have to be the only modus operandi that would ensure its representative character?

How could it then be an integral part of the overall politico-administrative structure that will eventually take shape in relation to the third Republican Constitution that will have to be promulgated hopefully in the near future?

These are some of the loaded questions, pregnant with far-reaching significance, that demand credible answers.

(The writer is also the Editor of Social Justice, the monthly journal published by the Centre for Society and Religion.)

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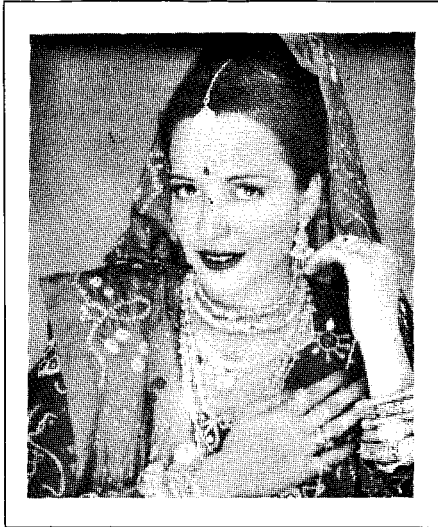
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