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New Year*



During his recent visit to Sri Lanka, European Union External Relations Commissioner Christopher Patten met with President Kumaratunga, PM Ranil Wickramasinghe and LTTE leader V.Pirapaharan.





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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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For a bipartisan consensus

The political crisis triggered off by the Presidential action last month in removing three cabinet Ministers in charge of defence, interior and mass communication, and bringing the subjects under her own control continues. The most damaging consequence of the crisis is that the peace process remains stalled. The precipitate and unwise action on the part of the Norwegians in suspending their facilitatory role served only to aggravate the crisis and the potential dangers to the peace process.

Underlying the crisis is the conflict between two centres of state power both claiming legitimacy based on popular mandates – a democratically elected President invested with enormous executive powers belonging to one political party, and the Prime Minister belonging to another party who secured a majority in parliament at the last general election. It is the inability or the unwillingness to respect and abide by the respective popular mandates they got and work out a compromise arrangement of political cohabitation that has brought the country to this crisis point. Giving an apt description of the situation, the LTTE leader in his annual address on 27 November said, "There is no coherent structure in the form of a government.... The power of the state is torn between the heads of the two most powerful Sinhala political parties. The Presidency and the Parliament are in conflict with each other..... The power struggle between the two leaders has resulted in the destabilisation of the state and the peace process has come to a standstill."

But the situation is not hopeless and recovery from the brink is still possible. Though the Norwegian role in the peace process remains suspended, the ceasefire between government forces and the LTTE is holding. In fact the President after taking charge of the defence portfolio gave specific instructions to the armed forces that the Ceasefire Agreement must be strictly complied with. The President also, in confirming the status and role of the international Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission as the body responsible for ensuring compliance with the Ceasefire Agreement, directed the armed forces to abide by their rulings. For a President who has been a frequent critic of the SLMM even to the extent of publicly demanding that the Norwegian government should remove its head, her direction to the armed forces represented quite a change. She has also ordered the police and the armed forces not to interfere or prevent any political activities by members of the LTTE in government controlled areas.

In the meantime, a top-level Committee of senior officials belonging to the President's and Prime Minister's offices have been engaged in drawing up a set of proposals covering important areas with a view to formulating a working cohabitation arrangement between the President and the Prime Minister. There have also been three rounds of inconclusive discussions between the President and the Prime Minister. Both have agreed to meet again and continue with discussions to take the matter further. The President has also presented a power-sharing scheme, though the details of which have been unwisely leaked to the media. The scheme envisages the setting up of a Joint Peace Council (JPC) to be co-chaired by both the President and Prime Minister that would set the overall policy direction of the peace process and to which the negotiating team would report. Her scheme also provides for the inclusion of presidential nominees to the Government's negotiating team, and the formation of an advisory body comprising civil society personalities. While the proposals contained in the President's scheme provide mechanisms for resolving the deadlock in the peace process that has arisen, they also facilitate a substantial broad-basing of the peace process with greater participation from diverse interest groups.

One significant criticism made against the manner in which the peace process was being managed during the last two years was the exclusivist attitude adopted by the Government in that only members of the negotiating team and few other advisors were aware of what really was going on. The President herself was marginalised from the peace process. It should have been self evident from the configuration of political forces and their respective numbers represented in parliament that such an approach would inevitably fail.

It is in the interest of everyone in the country, and particularly the three principal actors, the United National Front led government, the PA-led opposition and the LTTE, that the peace process is progressed without delay. The counter-proposal by the LTTE for the setting up of an Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) goes well beyond the present Constitution. When and if the talks resume, the LTTE may be persuaded to settle for less at the negotiating table. But for the government to deliver on the settlement, it is more than probable that amendments to the Constitution will be required. For this to happen, the Prime Minister must realise, though his government has a majority in parliament, he does not have the required two-thirds majority to enact amendments to the Constitution. The only way in which the government will be able to deliver on any prospective settlement with the LTTE is to respect and recognize the duality of the popular mandates possessed by the incumbent President and the Prime Minister and arrive at a bipartisan consensus with the PA-led opposition.

● Patten 'moderately optimistic'

No one can doubt the importance of the recent visit to Sri Lanka by the European Union External Relations Commissioner, Chris Patten, though his decision to meet the LTTE supremo, Velupillai Pirapaharan, particularly on a day which coincided with his birthday turned out to be a controversial one. The significance of the event for the LTTE should not be under-estimated for Mr. Patten was the highest ranking foreign diplomat to meet and have discussions with the LTTE leader.

Sinhala nationalist hardliners protested against a visit to Sri Lanka by Chris Patten, denouncing his planned meeting with the Tamil Tiger leader Velupillai Pirapaharan.

The Patriotic National Movement (PNM), led by Sri Lankan cricket World Cup winning former skipper Arjuna Ranatunga and JVP leader Wimal Weerawansa, staged noisy demonstrations outside Patten's hotel in Colombo. Police fired water cannons to douse a burning effigy of Patten and in the process also hit journalists covering the noisy but peaceful demonstration by an estimated 1,500 protesters.

Police had stepped up security for Patten who began his three-day visit on 25 November with a briefing from Norway's ambassador Hans Brattskar on the Norwegian-led peace process. He later called on President Chandrika Kumaratunga.

The EU commissioner's visit came in the wake of a political stand-off between the President and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe which has threatened to derail efforts to broker a peace process to end a decades-long violent conflict between government forces and the Tamil Tigers. "We condemn this visit which insults the sovereignty of the nation," the PNM said in a statement. Adding to the ire of the PNM was Patten's meeting with Tamil Tiger supremo on his 49th birthday, 26 November. The PNM said it wanted to know on what basis Patten was "attending Pirapaharan's birthday party." The PNM is staunchly opposed to Norway's bid to broker peace between the Colombo government and the Tigers. The European Union is a key supporter of Oslo's peace attempts. As for Mr Patten, he did not know when the Tiger leader's birthday fell, and it was a mere coincidence that his visit was programmed for that day.

Patten in a statement shortly after his arrival said he would use his trip "to express the continued commitment of the European Commission to the people of Sri Lanka regardless of party and group and to see for myself the chances for a speedy resolution to the current impasse." Patten said

NEWS REVIEW

he would be seeking assurances from LTTE leader that he was committed to implementing the Norwegian-brokered ceasefire which has been in operation since February last year. "He should make it clear that he has given up violence for good and has settled for politics and the ballot box," Patten told the BBC before leaving for Kilinochchi. Patten was also critical of the LTTE's practice of recruiting child soldiers and sending some of them as suicide bombers to carry out attacks and the political assassinations.

Ignoring the protests, the defence ministry, now directly under the control of the President, allowed the use of a military helicopter for Patten to travel for his talks with the Tiger leader.

Following the meeting between the LTTE leader and Mr Patten on 26 November in Kilinochchi, the leader of the political section of the LTTE Mr. S. P. Thamilchelvan, speaking to media said, "Our leader Mr. Velupillai Pirapaharan told Mr. Patten it is not at all in the hands of the Liberation Tigers to ensure that there is no return to violence and that it is completely up to the Sinhala polity to see there is no return to war. Mr. Pirapaharan very clearly explained to Mr. Patten that we remain committed to resolving the conflict peacefully." "Our leader told Mr. Patten that the ceasefire and the peace talks have not led to development or reconstruction in the Tamil homeland. The international community is concerned that the instability in the south will eventually precipitate war. Mr. Patten expressed these concerns of the international community during the talks with our leader," Mr. Thamilchelvan said.

"This is an important meeting. It was very satisfactory and gave hope. Most importantly we discussed the crisis in the south. We discussed how it could adversely affect the peace process. In this context Mr. Patten was keen to find out about the LTTE's stand regarding the peace process and the ceasefire agreement," Thamilchelvan further said.

"Our national leader very clearly explained the importance of peace talks. He told Mr. Patten that we are firmly committed to peaceful means of finding a solution (to the conflict) that will satisfy the aspirations of our people. Mr. Pirapaharan very clearly stressed to Mr. Patten that we remain firmly committed to the smooth and proper implementation of the ceasefire agreement," Mr. Thamilchelvan said.

A journalist asked him whether they had sought the lifting of the ban on the LTTE during the meeting.

"No we did not take up the matter at all - be-

cause many EU officials have met us. They have met our leader too. European countries have concern for our people's aspirations, they have expectations from us. Hence we did not take up the issue of the ban," Mr. Thamilchelvan replied.

"We explained to Mr. Patten the aspirations of our people. We told him that 21 months have passed since the ceasefire agreement was signed; but that the provisions of the ceasefire are not properly implemented; that our people have not seen any tangible progress or benefit; that military restrictions on them are continuing, normalcy is yet to be restored in the north-east," he said.

Asked by a journalist as to what Mr. Patten told the LTTE about the meeting he had had with the Sri Lankan President, Mr Thamilchelvan said, "Yes. He told us about it. He said that President Kumaratunga is also keen to find solution to the problem through peaceful, negotiated means. We are closely watching the situation in the south. We told Mr. Patten we will wait patiently until a firm political leadership emerges in the south that can take forward the peace process. Hence this is not the right context for us to send any message to Sri Lanka's President now." Answering another question regarding the possibility of starting peace talks with President Kumaratunga, he said, "It is not a question of talking to Chandrika. What will matter in the future would be her commitment to the peace process."

Mr. Patten spoke briefly to reporters at the Kilinochchi grounds before boarding the Sri Lanka Air Force Helicopter. Mr. Patten said that he had emphasised the importance of "people turning their backs on violence for good ahead of the peace process."

On his return to Colombo following his meeting with the LTTE leader, Mr Patten told journalists, "He said six times in the one-and-a-quarter-hour meeting that his LTTE organisation was committed to the peace process and expect to reach a satisfactory conclusion." The Tiger leader had said the choice of war or peace rested with the Colombo government.

Chris Patten said that in his meeting with the LTTE leader, he had stressed that the Tigers should renounce violence "once and for all", stop ceasefire violations, accept a federal solution and address the issue of a Muslim delegation to the peace talks. Patten made it clear to Pirapaharan that "whatever happens in the past, the In-

ternational community wants the LTTE to turn its back for once and for all on violence and commit itself to the peace process. The International Community cannot accept trying to achieve political ends through violence." He said he had also made it "plain" to Pirapaharan that if violence broke out again, it would attract "implacable criticism of the international community."

In the meeting with Pirapaharan, Patten said he referred to the Oslo declaration where the Tigers accepted a Federal solution to the ethnic question and told the Tiger leader that LTTE proposals should be a set of suggestions and not the final negotiation position because it is quite difficult to associate them with any form of federal solution he was aware of.

Referring to the allegations of ceasefire violations, Patten said he told Prabhakaran that if the international community finds any truth in them, it would "go to question the good faith of the LTTE in the peace process."

Patten said he also asked that problems related to the SLMC demand for a separate Muslim representation for the peace talks - which the Tigers had hitherto denied - should be resolved in the interest of the Muslim community.

Patten said the only thing he could say about Prabhakaran's response was that the Tiger leader "was keen to say that he was committed to the peace process and renounces violence." "On six occasions during the one hour of talk he (Pirapaharan) said he and the LTTE were committed to the peace process and to reach a satisfactory conclusion." "Do I believe him? His record isn't very encouraging, but we shall see and I hope he has made the move from struggle and violence to political action." Asked if by visiting Prabhakaran, he had accorded him legitimacy, Patten said, "I think it is nonsense."

Patten however declined to comment whether Tiger leader's commitment to peace was genuine. "What will answer this (i.e. whether the Tigers are genuine in the peace process) is whether more students going to school in future... rather not bombs going off," he said.

He also criticized the LTTE's recruitment of child soldiers, some of whom have been sent in the past as suicide bombers to carry out attacks and political assassinations. "I think Sri Lanka deserves peace. I hope politicians in Colombo and the LTTE will work for peace," he said, adding that all sections of Sri Lanka "from the top to bottom" wanted an end to war.

Asked if he was optimistic for the end of three decades of ethnic bloodshed, Patten said he was by nature "moderately optimistic with a tinge of realism."

● Tigers mark heroes day

The Tamil Tigers observed their annual heroes' week culminating on 27 November to commemorate 17,708 men and women killed in their struggle for a separate state. The LTTE traces its beginnings back to 1972, but the first Tiger fatality at the hands of government forces was on November 27, 1982. On 27 November of every month, LTTE leader Pirapaharan makes his annual speech which is keenly awaited by political parties, diplomats and other analysts who subject its contents to minute analysis with a view to finding out as to what the Tiger leader is up to.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had already decorated the many parts of the island's northeast with red and yellow flags and lit lamps to honour their war dead. Commemoration events attended by several thousands of people were held all over the northeast of the island.

During the week Tiger cadres visited their war cemeteries to pay homage to the thousands of men and women who died during the campaign for a separate homeland. The LTTE's Peace Secretariat website said the 17,708 men and women killed in their struggle included 241 suicide bombers. Pirapaharan took part in a hero's week celebration on 25 November at an undisclosed location, the website added.

"It is only through their sacrifices the struggle for the rights of the Tamil people has captured the attention of the international community in the present time," the Tiger peace secretariat said.

A top LTTE regional leader known by his nom de guerre, Karuna, said they were able to hold peace talks with the Colombo government because of the sacrifices made by Tiger fighters. "Our martyrs helped us reach new heights in our military prowess, paving the way for the government and us to seek a negotiated solution to the conflict," Karuna was quoted as saying by the pro-LTTE website, TamilNet.

Karuna said the Tigers believed that peace through negotiation was possible. "However, politics in the south make us apprehensive of the future of the peace process and we will not be surprised if war is thrust on us again."

LTTE Leader Velupillai Prabhakaran in his annual message commemorating the Heroes' Day: (1) Rejected accusations made by President Chandrika Kumaratunga that his organisation was strengthening its military power and preparing for war; (2) Denied allegations that the recent proposals submitted by his organisation to establish an Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) in the Northeast constituted the foundation for the creation of a separate state; (3) Characterising the current power struggle in Colombo between the President

and the Prime Minister as a typical repetitive historical confrontation between the two major Sinhala political parties. He observed that this phenomenon erupted whenever one party in power attempted to seek a solution to the Tamil ethnic conflict. "This tragic political drama has been continuing for the past fifty years, aggravating the plight of the Tamil people"; (4) Warned that "if the Sinhala chauvinistic ruling elites continued to deny the rights of our people and oppose reconciliation and if the conditions of oppression continued, the Tamils would have no alternative but to secede and form an independent state invoking the right to self-determination of our people; and (5) Asserted that "Our organisation, as well as our people do not want war. We want peace and we want to resolve our problems through peaceful means. We are deeply committed to the peace process. It is because of our sincere commitment to peace that we are firmly and rigidly observing the ceasefire."

● Live telecast of VP's address

Just three weeks after President Chandrika Kumaratunga took over the state media, the national television Rupavahini set a historic record - facilitating a live telecast of Velupillai Prabhakaran's "Maveerar Day" address to Europe.

The live programme was made possible by a technical team from Rupavahini and Sri Lanka Telecom (facilitating the uplink of the live programme) visiting Kilinochchi. The entire segment of the programme via satellite was three hours, from 5.30 p.m. to 7.30 pm and thereafter for an hour from 10.30 p.m. Rupavahini Chairman Harim Peiris confirmed that the live satellite broadcast, the first ever for the LTTE, was upon a request made by a foreign company, known to be a pro-LTTE Tamil Television Network. The network is said to have bureaux in Britain, France, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Holland and India. However, in north Sri Lanka, the company operates as a Digital Media Network.

The programme content on "Maveerar Day" included coverage of ceremonies from Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Kilinochchi. As the live coverage of the ceremonies was being aired in Kilinochchi, footage of ceremonies held in Trincomalee and Batticaloa were interpolated. It projected pictures of cemeteries, mourning family members of those who were killed in battle with security forces, street decorations and the address by LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran.

Besides the uplink facility being provided to the LTTE for the first time, The Sunday Times (Colombo) reported that had there has been an about-turn in the State

media policy towards the LTTE. This was at the instance of President Kumaratunga who first adopted a hostile stance against the LTTE and later in a change of mind moderated herself considerably.

As soon as the Media Ministry was taken over by the President, the heads of the four state media institutions were briefed by Dr. Sarath Amunugama and Anura Priyadarshana Yapa at the President's House. In the first four days after the takeover, they were instructed to highlight the implications of the LTTE proposals presented to the government on October 31, three days prior to President Kumaratunga's move.

Rupavahini was given priority to spearhead this campaign and Nimal Ekanayake was appointed special programme consultant by the President, especially to look into the new programme line-up.

The programme line-up included introducing a variety of political programmes to discuss the negative impact of the LTTE proposals. Also a separate set of programmes were asked to be produced to criticise LTTE activities. They included documentaries on the North-East situation, the implications to the armed forces serving in the area. Also a special programme was scheduled to be produced to include the Navy which had earlier come under fire from the government media.

But after a few days, the whole process had been halted. Orders were sent by President's spokesperson Harim Peiris to Mr. Ekanayake, directing him to launch a campaign to support the proposed arrangements to reach consensus on national issues between the President and the government.

Defending the move to provide an uplink facility to broadcast the LTTE programmes, Rupavahini Chairman Harim Peiris said: "In the past we were criticising LTTE's illegal activities such as procuring arms, killing opponents and extorting money. But now there is a review of the LTTE activities."

Deputy General Manager (International) Sri Lanka Telecom H.L. Sunil told The Sunday Times that the Telecom moved in following request from the Rupavahini Corporation to provide the facility. He said the Tamil Television Network had paid Rs. 400,000 for the Telecom facilities while the sum paid for transmission facilities was not known immediately. On instructions from Colombo, the Jaffna Telecom office also had provided a temporary telecommunication line with International Direct Dialing facilities to facilitate the co-ordination of the programmes.

The JVP, the Patriotic National Movement and the Sihala Urumaya slammed the President for facilitating the live telecast. A senior JVP MP said: "President Kumara-

tunga took over the defence, interior and mass communication ministries on the pretext of safeguarding national security interests. But she has proved that there is no difference between her style of handling the so-called peace process and the procedures adopted by Premier Ranil Wickremesinghe."

Recalling that the PA vehemently protested the UNF's decision to allow the LTTE to upgrade its clandestine Voice of Tigers (VOT) radio broadcasts in November last year, the JVP accused the President and her advisors of trying to woo the Tigers by offering them various facilities.

"We never expected the President to allow this," a patriotic national front spokesman said. "This is ridiculous," he said, criticising the president for taking a pro-LTTE stance in a bid to appease the international community. The JVP warned that the people would pressurise the president to hand over the defence, interior and mass communication ministries if she continued to do what the UNF did before she stepped in. "It wouldn't be long," JVP said.

A senior UNF official said that the president wants to convince the LTTE and the international community that she was prepared to help the peace process.

● Japan reassures support

December 5 - In a statement released yesterday, Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Yoriko Kawaguchi, said her government welcomed the continued commitment of the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE to the ceasefire, and expressed the hope that the question of who on the part of the Government of Sri Lanka is responsible for the peace process would be resolved through talks between Sri Lanka's President and the Prime Minister.

The statement said: "The Government of Japan, as one of the co-chairs of the Tokyo Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka, has been observing with serious apprehension the current political crisis in Colombo, because of which the peace process of Sri Lanka has been in suspension. It notes that efforts have been made through the meetings between President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe as well as the discussions in the Committee of Officials. The Government of Japan strongly hopes that these efforts will create further momentum towards the prompt settlement of the current crisis and the early resumption of the peace process.

"The Government of Japan welcomes that all the parties concerned, including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), have reconfirmed their commitment to the peace process and full compliance with the ceasefire agreement. The Government of Ja-

pan hopes that the question of responsibility for the peace process, on the part of the Government of Sri Lanka, will be resolved through the process to settle the current crisis, and thus create a solid basis for attaining a durable peace in Sri Lanka.

"The Government of Japan reiterates its continued determination to support the peace process in Sri Lanka, and to implement steadily its assistance pledged at the Tokyo Conference, based upon the principles of the Tokyo Declaration. The Tokyo Conference provided the people of Sri Lanka with an unprecedented opportunity to reconstruct and develop their society for the first time after two decades of damages inflicted by the civil war. The Government of Japan reminds all the parties concerned of the importance to maintain the momentum of the donor community to assist Sri Lanka, and urges them to settle the current political crisis swiftly and to resume the peace process expeditiously, so as not to miss this unique opportunity."

● NPC on current crisis

The stalling of the peace process, coupled with the suspension of Norwegian facilitation, has been the most dangerous aspect of the political crisis that erupted with the President's take-over of three ministries of the government. Getting the peace process back on track would be the number one priority of the entire polity. The National Peace Council (NPC) of Sri Lanka, in a statement released on 6 December said that the joint committee of high officials appointed by the President and Prime Minister to work out an agreement between them as a positive action. We are glad that these two leaders have publicly acknowledged their need to work together even at this late stage.

We note that unilateral actions taken when joint actions are both expected and necessary will create suspicion that what is really being sought is to implement a hidden agenda.

In any negotiation much depends on the spirit with which the negotiators enter into the negotiations. Erosion of confidence at the outset itself due to unilateral action is a bad sign. We appeal to the two sides to make a sincere effort to reach an agreement that will enable the peace process to be taken forward.

It should be clear to the politicians on both sides that people do not want another election as it will not provide an answer to the problems that need to be solved jointly. On the other hand, a successful building up of the joint committee concept could not only resolve the political crisis. It could also take the country towards a bipartisan approach to constitutional reform and to the resolution of the ethnic conflict.

The National Peace Council believes that bipartisanship will be best achieved on the basis of the acceptance that the ethnic conflict can only be resolved through negotiations and that the framework should be a federal one. We call on the President and Prime Minister, with the backing of their respective parties, to agree to a joint initiative to democratise the polity through constitutional reform that also provides accommodation for an interim self-governing unit in the north east of the country.

● US Court ruling on 'terrorism' law

San Francisco based U.S Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit ruled Wednesday, 3 December that the United States Government "cannot convict groups of individuals of violating a federal law against 'material support' for terrorist organizations unless it proves beyond a reasonable doubt that they knew the organizations were involved in terrorist activity," The Washington Post reported. The case was brought by the Center for Constitutional Rights on behalf of a human rights organization in Los Angeles and several groups of Sri Lankan Tamils in the U.S.

"Without the knowledge requirement," Judge Harry Pregerson wrote for the panel majority, "a person who simply sends a check to a school or orphanage run by 'a U.S.-designated terrorist group' could be convicted under the statute, even if that individual is not aware of 'the group's' designation or of any unlawful activities undertaken by the 'group'." the paper reported.

The ruling also reaffirmed a decision by the same court barring the government from enforcing the 1996 law's prohibitions against providing "personnel" and "training" to designated terrorist groups. The terms are too ill-defined to provide adequate notice of precisely what is banned, and are thus unconstitutional, the 9th Circuit ruled, the Post said.

David Cole, a Georgetown University law professor and lawyer with the Center for Constitutional Rights who argued the case, was quoted by the Post as saying, "This decision will mitigate the substantial chilling effect that this statute has cast over those who seek to provide humanitarian aid to conflict-ridden areas."

The suit was brought in March 1998 by the CCR on behalf of the plaintiffs in which they asked the court to declare that the material support statute, 18 U.S.C. § 2339B, violates the First Amendment insofar as it criminalizes the provision of such support.

Judge Audrey Collins rejected plaintiffs' argument that the ban on material support violates the First Amendment insofar as it criminalizes the provision of cash and

"We are not preparing for war"

- Pirapaharan

"Our organisation, as well as our people, do not want war. We want peace and we want to resolve our problems through peaceful means. We are deeply committed to the peace process. It is because of our sincere commitment to peace that we are firmly and rigidly observing ceasefire.... There is absolutely no truth in President Kumaratunga's accusation that we are preparing for war by procuring weapons, recruiting on a large scale and strengthening our military machine. We are engaged in the task of maintaining peace but certainly not preparing for war. It is true that we have been recruiting on a small scale since we needed manpower for our administrative structures. The President has distorted and exaggerated this matter and is trying to create fear among the Sinhala people that we are preparing for war," Mr Vellupillai Pirapaharan, the leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

humanitarian aid that is solely intended to further the lawful purposes of a designated organization. However, the Judge agreed with plaintiffs that the law is unconstitutionally vague to the extent that it criminalizes the provision of material support in the form of "personnel" and "training."

She found that these provisions "did not... appear to allow persons of ordinary intelligence to determine what type of training or provision of personnel is prohibited" and, furthermore, "appeared to prohibit activity protected by the First Amendment - distributing literature and information and training others to engage in advocacy."

She then issued a narrowly tailored preliminary injunction barring the government from prosecuting any of the plaintiffs in the suit or any members of the organizational plaintiffs for providing "personnel" or "training" to the LTTE.

Judge Collins' preliminary injunction was appealed to the Ninth Circuit, which affirmed it in March 2000. Her summary judgment order was reviewed by the Ninth Circuit, which heard oral argument on March 5, 2003, the ruling of which was made on 3 December. □

(LTTE) in said in his annual statement commemorating the LTTE's Heroes' Day on 27 November 2003.

The LTTE leader also denied allegations that the recent proposals submitted by his organisation to establish a Self Governing Authority for the Northeast constituted the foundation for the creation of a separate state.

The LTTE leader also warned that "if the Sinhala chauvinistic ruling elites continue to deny the rights of our people and oppose reconciliation and if the conditions of oppression continue we have no alternative other than to secede and form an independent state invoking the right to self-determination of our people."

Following are extracts from his statement:

"There is no coherent structure in the form a government in the Sinhala nation. The power of the state is torn between the heads of the two most powerful Sinhala political parties. The Presidency and the Parliament are in conflict with each other. Ranil Wickremasinghe's administration is severely weakened and paralysed following the President's take-over of the Ministries of Defence, Interior and Media. The power struggle between the two leaders has resulted in the de-stabilisation of the state and the peace process has come to a standstill. Frustrated by the confused situation the Government of Norway has suspended its facilitatory role. Because of this sudden development in the south, the conditions of peace are endangered. The peace talks as well as the peaceful resolution of the ethnic conflict are threatened. The Tamil speaking people and the international governments committed to peace are concerned and disappointed over this crisis.

President Kumaratunga has put forward two reasons for her intervention. One is that the national security and sovereignty of Sri Lanka are threatened

as the LTTE has been strengthening its military structure and preparing for war. Secondly, the government of Ranil Wickremesinghe has provided too many concessions to the Tamil Tigers. I wish to deny categorically that there is any truth in these allegations. These false accusations are levelled against us to tarnish the credibility of our liberation organisation and to disrupt the peace process.

Our organisation, as well as our people do not want war. We want peace and we want to resolve our problems through peaceful means. We are deeply committed to the peace process. It is because of our sincere commitment to peace that we are firmly and rigidly observing ceasefire. It is our organisation that took the initiative of declaring the cessation of hostilities unilaterally and observing peace for the last two years tolerating the provocative actions of the state's armed forces.

There is absolutely no truth in President Kumaratunga's accusation that we are preparing for war by procuring weapons, recruiting on a large scale and strengthening our military machine. We are engaged in the task of maintaining peace but certainly not preparing for war. It is true that we have been recruiting on a small scale since we needed manpower for our administrative structures. The President has distorted and exaggerated this matter and is trying to create fear among the Sinhala people that we are preparing for war.

The ceasefire has not created conditions of peace and normalcy in the Tamil homeland. Oppressive conditions of alien military occupation prevail here. The Sri Lankan armed forces are refusing to fulfil the conditions and obligations of the Ceasefire Agreement. As the military occupation continues in large areas of civilian settlements under the cover of High Security Zones several thousands of people are subjected to enormous suffering, denied the right to return to their homes and villages. Furthermore, the Tamil civilians continue to suffer harassment and persecution by the occupation army. Though the war has been brought to an end the suffering of our people continues. Our people have not yet experienced total peace and conditions of normal life. Yet, there is total peace and normalcy in the Sinhala nation. There

is also improvement in the economic life of the people. While the Sinhala nation enjoys the positive benefits of the ceasefire the tragic oppressive conditions of the Tamils continue. This is the current existential reality.

Our organisation has not been rewarded with too many concessions during these two years of ceasefire as accused by President Kumaratunga. Instead, our organisation faced severe losses. During the ceasefire period, two of our merchant ships were attacked and destroyed by the navy in the international waters. Furthermore, several of our fishing trawlers were destroyed. As a consequence of these events we lost twenty-six of our Sea Tiger cadres including senior commanders. Though these provocative actions pushed us to the brink of tolerance, we maintained calm and observed peace. Such behaviour clearly demonstrates our serious commitment to peace.

The peace talks between our liberation organisation and the government of Ranil Wickremesinghe, which started in Thailand during September last year, have failed to make any concrete progress. Resolutions and decisions taken during the six rounds of talks that lasted more than six months were not implemented. The sub-committees, which were formed, to deal with the issues of de-escalation and normalisation and for the resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced became defunct. Our efforts to negotiate with the government to resolve the monumental problems faced by our people became futile. Having ignored the more serious, critical existential issues of resettlement of the displaced, reconstruction of the war damaged infrastructure and the re-establishment of normalcy in the Tamil homeland under military occupation, the government representatives as well as the facilitators devoted their main attention to human values and norms and on guidelines and roadmaps towards a final solution. As a consequence the negotiating process moved in a different direction circumventing the problems and aspirations of our people. In the meantime, Ranil's administration was only interested in projecting the peace process as an ideal model to attract aid and loans from donor countries to build up the economy that collapsed as a consequence of war.

At the same time, the government was also engaged in a plan to set-up an international safety net with the assistance of certain countries. This strategic ploy of Wickremesinghe's government allowed the space for the increased interest and intervention of several international governments in the peace initiative as well as in the negotiating process. Some countries have even stipulated parameters within which the Tamil national question has to be resolved. It is because of these international interventions that the peace negotiations became more complex. It was during these circumstances that a crucial meeting of donor countries took place in Washington in April this year marginalizing our organisation. As the main party in conflict enjoying equal status in the peace process, we were disappointed and saddened by such humiliation. It is because of these factors we decided to suspend our participation in the talks and to review the multiple dimensions of the entire peace process.

It is not feasible to find a permanent solution to the Tamil national conflict immediately within a short period. It may take quite a long time. But the existential problems faced by our people are very urgent and they cannot be postponed for longer period. Faced with the urgent humanitarian needs on one side and the issues of resettlement, rehabilitation and reconstruction on the other, the immense, complex problems faced by our people necessitates immediate solutions. Having examined these issues in depth, we realised the urgency of setting up an interim administrative authority in the Northeast. We are of the opinion that the proposed interim administrative authority should be an effective mechanism capable of restoring conditions of normalcy in the military occupied Tamil homeland and to undertake the huge tasks of resettlement, rehabilitation and development works efficiently and expeditiously. It is on this basis, we urged the government to submit draft proposals for an interim administrative structure insisting that it should be vested with substantial authority. We also informed the government that we were prepared to resume negotiations if concrete set of proposals were presented to us. I also emphasised the importance of creating

an interim administrative set-up with substantial authority when I met the Norwegian Foreign Minister Mr Peterson. I also explained to him the necessity of establishing such an administrative body to reconstruct our nation devastated by twenty years of war and to rebuild the shattered lives of our people.

In response to our request, the government submitted, one after the other, two sets of draft proposals. The interim council envisaged in these proposals were not invested with adequate authority as we suggested. At the same time the role of our organisation was also not clearly defined. The proposals envisaged a development orientated administrative structure with limited powers. Therefore, we rejected these proposals as unacceptable. Thereafter the government submitted a third set of proposals for our consideration. Though these proposals were unsatisfactory, we did not reject them.

We realised that the government was hesitant to put forward a concrete set of proposals as expected by our organisation that would satisfy the aspirations of our people. At the same time, we felt that a misconception might arise as if the LTTE was continuously rejecting all the new proposals put forward by the government. Therefore, we decided not to reject the latest draft proposal out right but to submit our counter proposals to create an interim administrative council with substantial authority. We were not in a hurry to formulate our draft proposal. Since it was the first time we were forwarding our proposals in a written form we wanted to formulate a concrete, practical and original framework though it was an interim set up and might involve time in formulation. We also wanted this framework to have a proper mechanism to find solutions to the complex existential problems of our people. Therefore, we formulated our draft proposals consulting different sectors of people at different levels on a wider scale. We also consulted wider sections of the people of Tamil Eelam, our legal and constitutional experts abroad and international scholars.

There is no need for me to elaborate in detail the draft proposals we submitted to the government for an Interim Self-Governing Authority. The draft

has already been released through the media for everybody's scrutiny and analysis. Though our draft proposals have generated a lot of controversy and confusion, our effort towards a negotiated settlement was welcomed by several countries. Some countries welcomed our attempt, for the first time, to put forward our ideas in writing in a clear and comprehensive form. Ranil's administration did not reject our proposals but rather agreed to resume talks on that basis. But at the same time, the Sinhala racist forces are vehemently opposed to our draft proposals. Sinhala racist political parties and the media are raising critical voices. Critical reviews are coming from the Indian media world and from the Indian political analysts. In a statement released on behalf of the opposition parties, Mr Lakshman Kadirgamar presented a vehement critique of our proposals claiming that Sri Lanka's sovereignty was under serious threat as our draft, according to him, contains elements for a separate state. What surprised us was that within a few days after the release of the draft proposals President Kumaratunga took over three important Ministries that functioned under the government of Ranil Wickremesinghe. Whatever the reasons she attributes to her actions, it has now become a universal truth that she took this serious action as an immediate response to our draft proposals. As a consequence of her sudden intervention, Ranil's regime has become paralysed without power and the peace process severely endangered.

The allegations levelled against our draft proposals that they aim to create an independent Tamil state or that they contain stepping stones for separation are not true. Our proposals do not constitute a framework for a permanent, final solution. Our draft proposals deal with an interim arrangement. It is true that our proposals for an interim administrative council call for substantial self-governing authority without which massive programmes for the resettlement and rehabilitation of hundreds of thousands of displaced people and other major development projects could not be undertaken. At the same time regional administrative functions i.e. law and order, administration of justice, allocation of funds and distribution of lands also could not be effectively ex-

ecuted. In this context an important factor has to be taken into serious consideration. That is, large areas of the Northeast are already under our effective jurisdiction and efficiently administered by us. I wish to point out that this is the factual reality.

Today, harsh oppressive conditions prevail in the Northeast with the continuous military occupation of our lands and persecution of our people by the armed forces. As normalcy has not returned the suffering of the civilian masses continues. Our people face urgent humanitarian needs as well as serious existential problems. Therefore, we have presented this draft framework as a concrete structure to find just and reasonable solutions to these problems. Our draft framework has progressive, constructive and original elements. This proposed administrative structure is invested with self-governing authority so that the majority Tamils as well as the Muslims and Sinhalese living in Tamil Eelam could promote and enhance their political, social, economic and cultural life. But we regret to note that some forces are attempting to disrupt the peace process by distorting and exaggerating some features of self-governance found in our draft framework and interpreting them as a project for a separate state. We have presented our ideas for an interim administrative authority as a counter programme to the government's proposals and as a basis for negotiations. Our initiative undertaken with an honest and sincere commitment to the peace process has unleashed a political storm in the south. Sinhalese racist forces are up in arms against us. The power struggle that erupted between the heads of two major political parties of the Sinhala nation has shaken the very foundation of the state structure. Sinhala racism, which has been denying the rights of the Tamils, now stands exposed with its mask torn apart, revealing its true, ugly face to the world.

As a tragic drama without ending, the Tamil ethnic conflict continues forever. Whenever the party in power attempts to resolve the Tamil issue, the party in opposition opposes it and derails the effort. This mode of conflict continues even when the opposition becomes the ruling party and attempts reconciliation. This Sinhala political

(continued on next page)

The political crisis and the peace process

Dr. S. Narapalasingam

The need for a peace process is accepted by all, including the military establishment. Conditions for achieving permanent peace, particularly after two decades of bloodshed and enormous destruction cannot be created overnight. Besides, communal politics have sustained the deep-rooted mistrust between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities. If lasting peace in united Sri Lanka is the present aim, besides negotiating for a political settlement to the ethnic conflict there has to be concerted efforts to build confidence, restore normalcy and promote unity between the divided communities. Although the MoU between the GOSL and the LTTE recognises the need for these, the approach to acquire lasting peace through negotiated political settlement was fundamentally flawed. As a result, the six rounds of peace talks between the GOSL and the LTTE held between September last year and April this year did not contribute much towards a final political settlement.

Despite the disagreements over the handling of the peace process, President Chandrika Kumaratunga who is also the leader of the main opposition party has on many occasions reiterated her firm

commitment to the peace process launched by Prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe soon after the last general election. Because of their inability to work together and moves by the Government to clip the powers of the President and ignore her executive powers, especially over defence and security forces, the power struggle between the two heads of State resulted in the current political crisis. It is only after this event the need for consensual politics at the present crucial time has been recognized by the peace activists and foreign governments, including Norway facilitating the peace talks with the LTTE.

Executive Presidential system

Some foreign governments/organizations interested in the peace process seem to have been unaware of the peculiarities of the Presidential form of government in Sri Lanka, introduced in 1978 by the then UNP leader the late J.R. Jayewardene to realize his political ambition. Some supporters of the UNF government have chosen to ignore these for obvious reason. The 1978 Constitution bestowed enormous coercive powers to the Executive President which he as head of state, head of the

executive arm of the government, chairperson of the meetings of Cabinet ministers and Commander-in-chief of the armed forces, exercised according to the political exigencies. The former President during his tenure boasted that he had extensive powers to do what he liked, except to change the gender of a Sri Lankan. He also compared himself to the ancient monarchs who ruled authoritatively. He was able to wield power in the ways he wished as he was also the leader of the majority party in Parliament.

The Executive Presidential system was condemned by the then powerless opposition as having devalued the Parliament and made the Prime Minister a mere puppet. Although there was general agreement after he retired from active politics that the system should be changed by curtailing the powers of the President and restoring the previous status of the Parliament, this has not happened because of the bitter rivalry and mistrust between the leaders of the two main parties.

The European parliament, which passed a resolution on November 20 concerning the political crisis in Sri Lanka, was apparently not aware of the provisions of the constitution relating to the powers of the Parliament and that the President was also elected by the people. The resolution urged the President to "work together with the democratically elected government and the Prime Minister" as if the President is an unelected head of state with no executive powers.

Political crisis at a crucial time

The LTTE submitted to the Sri Lankan Government on October 31 their counter proposals for interim administration for the North-East in a fairly comprehensive manner based on self-rule and their own administrative, judicial and security structures already established in the areas under their control. Government's latest set of proposals for interim administrative arrangement was given to the LTTE on July 17. The previous two sets of proposals were rejected by the LTTE. LTTE's proposals for setting up an Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) startled the Government as these have ignored completely the Government's proposals and the structure has no similarity with federal structures obtaining in other countries.

Clearly, the proposed ISGA for the North-East under LTTE's control (ab-

(continued from page9)

drama with its typical historical pattern has been staged regularly for the last fifty years. The directors of this bazaar drama are the two major Sinhala political parties. Though the main actors have been changing over time the theme of the story is the same. The current political crisis in Colombo is an open enactment of this absurd drama.

As a negative consequence of this chess game, in which the Tamils are used as pawns, several peace efforts have failed; several peace negotiations collapsed, several peace agreements torn apart and several peace pacts became defunct. As such, the Tamil conflict continues without resolution. The tragic life of our people continues.

We cannot allow the life and potential of our people to be systematically destroyed in the spider web of Sinhala chauvinism. Having renounced violence, we have been making every effort through non-violent means to promote peace and reconciliation. The international community is fully aware of this. But if the Sinhala chauvinistic ruling elites continue to deny the rights of our people and oppose reconciliation and if the conditions of oppression continue, we have no alternative other than to secede and form an independent state invoking the right to self-determination of our people. We urge the Sinhala political leadership not to create the objective conditions that would drive our people to seek this ultimate option." □

solute majority for the LTTE is assured in the set-up) with "plenary powers" to govern independently cannot be set up within the parameters of the present constitution. The preamble to the proposals states "that the Tamils did not participate in the making of the 1972 and 1978 Constitutions which institutionalized discrimination and denied them an effective role in the decision-making process". At the November 1 press briefing, S. P. Thamilselvan, head of LTTE's political wing said because of this serious wrongdoing, they were not bound by division of powers enshrined in the Constitution. A solution, therefore, has to be found outside the Constitution, he asserted.

It is also relevant to note that the devolution proposals put forward by the PA government in 1997 and 2000 were rejected by the UNP, the then opposition party. These retained controlling powers over specified areas with the center. President has suggested these too to be included with other proposals as a starting point in the negotiations with the LTTE.

Government's actions usurping her constitutional powers as head of the armed forces and the move to impeach the chief justice when a crucial judgment concerning the powers of the President was about to be delivered by the Supreme Court in her favour were important factors that provoked her to retaliate. The impeachment move was condemned by the Bat Council as it threatened to undermine the independence of the judiciary. The pertinent question here is why the provocative actions and intimidation at a time when the pressing need is the resolution of the national crisis?

The confrontation between the two heads of Government came to the fore on November 4 when President Chandrika Kumaratunga, exercising her constitutional powers, took charge of three ministerial portfolios - Defence, Interior and Mass communication and prorogued Parliament until November 19. Though the political crisis has considerably diverted the attention of the people and foreign governments away from the ISGA proposal, it has compelled the Government to rethink and change its approach to negotiated political settlement and lasting peace. The approach hitherto used by the Government to secure peace has also raised doubts about its aim. This characteristically seems to have been

influenced by short-term political interests rather than long-term national interests.

Doubts about the real aim

Had constitutional settlement been the aim when the talks with the Tamil Tigers started, the Government would have thought of the need to involve other key parties in the peace process. President's main complaint against the Government is that she has been sidelined in Government's peace efforts. The fact that the peace process was being used by both the GOSL and the LTTE to achieve their immediate aims was not obvious at the beginning. When the talks finally started after long delay the negotiating partners opted to meet without an agreed agenda and a time frame. Instead of discussing the core issues, they were mainly interested in dealing first with the destruction and distress caused by the protracted war.

LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran in this year's 'Heroes Day' address on November 27 said: "It is not feasible to find a permanent solution to the Tamil national conflict immediately within a short period." Because of this difficulty, there is the urgency to set up an interim administrative authority in the Northeast for carrying out the huge tasks of resettlement, rehabilitation and development works efficiently and expeditiously, he said. Thus, what the LTTE leadership has been aiming for after the cease-fire agreement is clear. They must have known from the very start that the UNF government acting alone would not be able to reach a final political settlement and that this was also not its aim. In view of these realities, the LTTE has astutely opted for ISGA which can become permanent over time, if the negotiations for final political settlement fail.

If the aim of the peace process has been to reach an agreement with the LTTE that will merely transform the current cease-fire into a permanent 'no-war' treaty, then there is some justification for keeping the talks confined to the Government and the LTTE. Since the President has also acknowledged on many occasions that there is no military solution to the conflict, this too would have influenced the Government to take this course. But this kind of peace amounts simply to buying time and will not help to eliminate the uncertainty about the future of the different communities and the country. It will only fuel the mistrust that is hindering

political settlement and the country will also return to the hopeless state without peace or development. This is the kind of mistake made in the past that made it difficult to solve the ethnic problem in the ensuing years.

External pressure

The Government has hoped to obtain the much needed foreign aid for reconstruction and development citing the suspension of hostilities and the on going peace talks as favourable environment for starting the related programmes and projects. The numerous violations of the terms of the MoU were ignored as both sides were keen to sustain the truce. Meanwhile, LTTE's agenda to become the only alternative authority in the North-East and international recognition as a separate political force was progressing smoothly. But when the donor community linked aid to tangible progress towards a final political settlement, the plans got disturbed. To the GOSL the pressure was intense as the US Dollars 4.5 billion aid pledged at the June 9-10 Tokyo donor meeting, despite LTTE's boycott could not be acquired without satisfactory progress at future talks with the Tigers.

LTTE's present proactive stand as against the compromising stand seen at the early stages of the peace talks can in part be due to the developments in the North-East which have enabled them to become an acknowledged authority to govern the North-East region. Moreover, the time has come to press for political legitimacy now that the world has recognised the importance of LTTE's role in an interim administrative structure necessary for rebuilding the war-ravaged areas in the North-East. The Tigers are also in a strong bargaining position because of not only their combative strength but also Government's predicament.

Their ISGA proposal is the culmination of the tactical moves made after the cease-fire in the light of developments within and outside Sri Lanka. The keen interest of foreign governments and international organizations in the peace process is due to the intense efforts made by the Sri Lankan government to get their support. To the dismay of some groups, including the LTTE the powerful countries have indicated the parameters within which a political solution should be found for the ethnic problem. When the Government placed great reliance on the international 'safety net' this kind of ex-

ternal pressure too must have been envisaged.

ISGA proposal

Government's chief peace negotiator Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris was unusually cautious in his response to LTTE's counter proposals. He admitted there were fundamental differences between LTTE's and government's own proposals. He said: "While the disparities between the positions of the parties are evident, the government is convinced that the way forward lies through direct discussion of the issues arising from both sets of proposals."

The common view of the local and foreign supporters of the peace process is that the ISGA proposal although falls outside the Oslo agreement to explore a suitable structure within the federal concept it is, nevertheless, useful as a basis for negotiating a political settlement. Even President Chandrika Kumaratunga despite her strong reservations has accepted this rank.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage after meeting Prime

Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe early November in Washington D.C. said an adapted version of the power-sharing plan could help progress towards ending the conflict. He also cautioned that the ISGA proposal "does go outside" the declarations by Sri Lanka and the international community on guidelines for a final settlement after peace conferences in Oslo in 2002 and Tokyo earlier this year. European Union External Relations Commissioner, Christopher Patten, who met the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran in Kilinochchi on November 26, has also expressed similar views.

The Government is now in a tight spot because it failed to take the Oslo declaration forward and decide in consultation with other parties on a suitable federal structure acceptable to all communities. This obviously needed a collective effort, which has been ignored right from the start of the peace process. The challenge now for all is to find the middle ground between the structure and the system implicit in the

ISGA proposal and the one desired by the Sinhalese and Muslims to safeguard their rights and interests in a democratic system. The importance of a Southern consensus is a must for avoiding a protracted negotiation process with the Tigers. The LTTE must also take note of the fact their ISGA proposal is not acceptable to the international community. Any move to establish it unilaterally will not be tolerated particularly by India. This is the dilemma that LTTE faces.

Plea for joint effort

The pleas of religious leaders, trade union leaders, professionals and other civil society leaders to resolve the political crisis quickly and make joint efforts to settle the ethnic issue should be taken seriously by the political leaders. The ongoing power struggle in the South has exposed the underlying problem hindering peace, progress and prosperity in Sri Lanka. The LTTE leader in his address described it colourfully and blamed the two leaders of the rival parties for the current political crisis.

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He wants the world to understand the compelling reason for his present approach to a final political settlement via the proposed ISGA for the North-East.

Despite the restraint and the conciliatory statements made by the President and the Prime Minister soon after the crisis erupted suddenly like a volcanic emission, there are yet no definite signs that the two leaders will pursue a new joint approach to the resolution of national issues. While the President is pressing for the formation of a national government to tackle these, the Prime Minister is reluctant to accept this proposal. The UNF leadership wants national consensus and not national government even for a year.

The appointment of the four-member committee headed jointly by Malik Samarawickrema and Mano Tittawela by the President and the Prime Minister to recommend suitable power-sharing arrangements to resolve the present crisis gave a positive sign that the peace process will advance in the right direction. It seemed at last they would stop quarrelling and strive together to secure peace and stability. But subsequent conflicting statements have cast some doubt about their real intentions. A major weakness in the peace process is the failure to set up similar advisory bodies comprising mainly civil society leaders who have no political ambitions but are mainly concerned about ethnic harmony, political stability, law and order, good governance and in general the future well-being of the country.

There is clear evidence that proposals concerning important political matters made by one leader are less likely to be accepted by the other. Even if their proposals appear reasonable and sound at the present time it is prudent to submit these to the committee. It is for the committee to examine the proposals and then submit their recommendations to the President and the Prime Minister. Regrettably, this approach has not been followed with regard to the President's latest proposals for breaking the deadlock. These were released to the press before submission to the committee and not surprisingly rejected by the Prime Minister. The move seems to have even upset the work being carried out cautiously by the committee.

The President's proposals include the setting up of a Joint Peace Council (JPC), led jointly by the President and Prime Minister to oversee and manage the over-

For a consensus on sharing political power and credit

Lakshman Gunasekera

'General agreement or opinion' is the Oxford Dictionary's short definition of the meaning of 'consensus'. In this country, 'consensus' is the buzz word today; the mantra for the kind of proper governance to meet urgent national requirements. These requirements, of course, are perceived differently by different sections of society.

For most people the priority is a consensus between the UNP Govern-

ment and the PA-controlled Presidency for the successful conduct of negotiations with the LTTE. For some people 'national consensus' is needed for pushing through economic policy measures some of which are likely to heap further social and economic burdens on the poor and socially marginalised.

For others a 'Sinhala consensus' is needed to confront and defeat the machinations of the other ethnic communities here which are already consolidated in their own consensus in the ethnic contest for control of the polity, territory and geographical resources.

For yet other people a 'Sinhala consensus' is needed to empower the Sinhala community not only to take courageous measures to share power with other communities in order to end the ethnic conflict, but also to build a new, truly post-colonial, self identity that has shed the neo-colonial cultural subservience that currently causes the collective angst that, in turn, breeds ultra nationalism.

The angst right now for the elite seems to be the need for 'consensus' between the two main political parties for the purpose of collaborative governance. The principal objectives are the smooth conduct of negotiations with the LTTE and the smooth consolidation of neo-liberal capitalism and class hegemony.

In my view, however, this emphasis on 'consensus' obfuscates the issue. It is a simplistic misreading of the current problem at the political centre of the Sri Lankan State.

The most frequent use of 'consensus' here is about the need for a bipartisan understanding of the urgent task peace negotiations and a bipartisan, common, policy for this purpose. But this emphasis misses the real target. It is not that the UNP and the PA have differing views on their approach to the ethnic conflict and to peace-making. Both these parties have slowly, but

all Peace Process and be in overall charge of the entire Peace Process and all its constituent operations, organizations and processes. The JPC will be assisted by an "Advisory Council on Peace" (ACP) comprising representatives of all political parties, clergy, professional and other national groups etc. who are interested in contributing to the furtherance of peace and a lasting solution to the ethnic problem in the country. It is doubtful whether the ACP as proposed will be useful for giving fair advice promptly to the JPC. The advisory body should not only be seen as impartial but also not too unwieldy. Hopefully, the idea of having an independent 'Advisory Council on Peace' will not be abandoned by the leaders.

There is the pressing need to change the present constitution for several reasons. But the reality now is the Government with executive powers bestowed to the President has two heads from different political parties. They share governing powers because of the separation of the executive and legislative branches as delineated in the present Constitution. The leaders must also realize that it is not possible to have a RW peace or CBK peace and that the peace cart will move forward only if the two pull it jointly in the right direction. There is the real danger the cart itself will go to pieces, if the two pull it in different directions.

The LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran will have the last laugh, if the Southern polity with democratic credentials fails to resolve the present crisis. □

surely (thanks to their common experience of the militancy of Tamil nationalism) arrived at similar positions on the ethnic conflict, their policies and actions in the past decade differing only in style and not in substance.

Both advocate a negotiated political settlement, both advocate very substantial power sharing including extensive regional autonomy, both advocate modernist/secularist conceptions of Sri Lanka State and society that emphasise cultural pluralism as against ethno-centrism, and both now distance themselves from the Sinhala ultra nationalism of old.

Current problem

The current problem at the political centre is not really one of contradictory or even different approaches by the UNP and the PA. If you don't believe me, ask any die-hard Sinhala ultra nationalist and she/he will tell you clearly that both these parties are "betraying the Sinhals" and are on the path to making such concessions to the LTTE "terrorists" that will destroy the Sinhala Nation and State.

The current crisis at the centre is to do with the wielding of political power and the contest for the fruits of this power. It is not a mere irony that the Second Republican Constitution has enabled the two main, usually competing, political parties to be both parallelly elected to power in the State, one in Government and one in the Presidency, but the Government with hardly any constitutional power and the President all powerful.

This is one of the major flaws of the J.R. Jayewardene Constitution. It is a flaw that betrays not only Jayewardene's own authoritarian tendencies, but also the tendencies of the capitalist class that backed him and now backs Ranil Wickremesinghe's UNP and, to a lesser extent, the SLFP/PA.

It is this very flaw that has now backfired on the capitalist class that, in those days of 'dharmista' rule so happily endorsed Jayewardene's preachings about an all powerful President not subject to the 'whims of Parliament'.

That is because Jayewardene's rigidly authoritarian mechanism wholly ignores a basic dynamic of capitalist democracy: inter-party rivalry and

competition for power. In its narrow-minded obsession with class hegemony, the ruling class has failed to devise a political framework that adequately accommodates, facilitates the very political dynamics (competition) that capitalist democracy engenders. That is because, the Sri Lankan ruling class, being the under-developed capitalist class it is, pays only lip service to capitalist democracy, unlike its infinitely more sophisticated Big Brother north of the Palk Straits.

Hence, the Constitution, while providing for parallelly elected Government and Presidency, has not provided a balance of power between these two institutions. And the ruling class and its 'think tanks' and lobbyists continue to fail to acknowledge the basic political dynamic that its own political system engenders: inter-party competition. That competition for power is not merely for the gaining of power and retaining of power, but is also aimed at the future regaining of power in elections to come.

The current Constitution functioned somewhat adequately as long as the two parties were in clear opposition to each other with one in Parliamentary Opposition and the other in both Governmental and Presidential power. With that alignment governance was possible (even if extremely bloody, under Premadasa). Today, however, both must share State power. But the Constitution, structurally and institutionally, simply does not provide for any such sharing. That is why the current constitutional framework is unable to effectively contain the inter-party rivalry in an institutionalised and constructively channelled form.

Once in Government, the UNP thought that it could use its immediate post-electoral popularity to ignore the fact of an equally elected President. Ranil and his associates sought to marginalise the President and thereby the PA from the fruits of power. The most important exercise of governance, the conduct of the peace process, was exclusively held by the UNP. And this is to leave aside all other important aspects of government such as national security, economic development, social welfare etc etc.

What the UNP did was to deny the

Presidency and the PA which held it from access to any fruits of the power which the PA actually wielded in being in control of the Presidency. In doing so, the UNP was denying the PA (and Chandrika) of that vital political resource of political credit.

Every time the UNP is successful in any governmental exercise, it gains credit for it thereby sustaining its ability for retaining political power and regaining power in future elections. Every time the UNP does this while the PA-held Presidency is side-lined, it denies the PA of their rightful share of such political credit.

PA entitled to share

So long as the PA holds any part of the State institutions, it is entitled to a share in the responsibility of governance and any credit that accrues from governmental success. This, it was denied even in the most crucial aspect of governance of today: the conduct of a peace process, the present form (Norwegian mediation, extensive regional autonomy, interim government) for which the PA, more than any other party, was responsible.

Political credit is crucial for competitive party politics. If the PA and Chandrika had continued to ignore their marginalisation they would have been committing political suicide. This is what prompted Chandrika Kumaratunga to use the profoundly authoritarian Presidential powers in exactly the way J.R. Jayewardene boasted they could be used when necessary.

If the previous failure of the capitalist political system here could not contain inter-party competition within civilian institutions and pushed the contest into authoritarian repression and political violence, today, yet again, the inability of the framework to contain that competition has caused a crisis at the centre of the State with all the potential for possible repression and violence in the South even as the more powerful anti-state force, the LTTE, remains dormant and secure in the North-East.

Thus, it is important to understand that the inter-party consensus on issues is already there and what is lacking is the sharing of the responsibility and political credit in the implementation

of that consensus. And what prevents this sharing of power at the centre of the State is the lack of any constitutional framework that provides for and even facilitates such a sharing of governmental responsibility and political credit.

If any collaboration between the two parties is to be effective, it is imperative that this constitutional lacuna is acknowledged.

Thus we have to go beyond the Constitution. The last thing that is needed is the now familiar chorus both from local bourgeois 'democracy' lobbyists (including former Leftists turned Liberals) as well as from Western governments with a simplistic understanding of the local context (and their usual colonial laziness to bother with local specifics).

If we remain stuck within the confines of constitutionalism as per the ridiculously flawed Second Republican Constitution we will not be serving the democratic needs of Sri Lankan society. If any collaboration between the two parties is to succeed, then there will have to be a series of new institutional mechanisms set up that will enforce a sharing of governmental responsibility and, thereby, of political credit in the event of successful governance in any sphere.

Rather than simplistically aiming at 'national government', the pragmatic approach would be to learn from the failed Liam Fox Agreement and to develop a scheme that elaborates greatly on that early endeavour. Most immediately, there needs to be a institutional mechanism, such as a hierarchical series of committees, that will enable both the UNP and the PA to jointly oversee both policy and implementation in the peace process.

This may include a committee that shares responsibility for defence. More importantly, such a structure should enable both parties to share the political credit for success as well as the blame for any failure.

There is no question of transcending the competitive dynamic. What is needed is the facilitation of shared power and shared credit. We need a win-win situation here, in the South between political parties, just as much as in the country as a whole, between communities. (Sunday Observer)

From ISGA to Eternity

The light at the end of the tunnel has been shut out until further notice

Vasuki Nesiah and S. Nanthikesan

The LTTE's proposal for an interim administration are to be welcomed as providing an opportunity to steer peace talks towards the realm of the 'political' in the deeper sense of the word. As is now legendary, the seemingly never ending first phase of the Paris peace talks between the US and Vietnam foundered around the shape of the table - often petty politics can be precisely the route to avoid conversations about Politics in the deeper sense, i.e., conversations about how we structure our collective lives, how we shape the terrain for struggles around accountability and democratic voice, pluralism and distributive justice. In the Sri Lankan context too many observers of the peace process feared that the peace process of the last two years, even when not in a state of official suspension, was running while standing still, i.e., that these talks about talks licensed the indefinite extension of the ostensible 'no war-no peace' status quo without delivering on the most meaningful peace dividend, namely the space to deepen democratic engagement in our collective lives. Against that backdrop, we feel that public debate over the interim arrangement proposal may present a critical opportunity for civil society to shape that space for engagement. In that context, rather than dismiss the proposal as merely a maximalist negotiating position, we want to take it seriously, and engage in a conversation about the vision of democracy and pluralism that inheres in the proposal.

Plunging into that conversation then, we would argue that the proposal reflects the deeply regressive character of the debate about interim administration, and even of prospective constitutional arrangements. The discussion about such arrangements between the major political parties in the South are dominated by a see-saw between moribund conceptions of national se-

curity and territorial integrity on the one hand, and an opportunist advocacy of 'peace on any terms' on the other. Concomitantly, in the LTTE camp, the vision is informed by a conception of self-determination that is fundamentally divorced from accountability and pluralism. As the debate between the PA and UNP has crescendoed in the last month, the conversation in the South has come under much scrutiny, even overshadowing the response to the LTTE's proposal. The paragraphs that follow seek to engage with the LTTE's proposal by examining the grammar that underlies its political vision. We want to highlight two aspects of this grammar - the democracy deficit and the anti-pluralist ethos.

The democracy deficit that characterizes the LTTE's politico-military authority in the North and East, as well of any default dispensation of the Sri Lankan state pushes Lanka towards interim arrangements that will be scarred by that deficit; while that may be the lay of the land at present, we in turn need to push to ensure that rather than consolidating that deficit and giving it a veneer of legality, interim arrangements are structured to at least incrementally strengthen efforts to contest and overcome that deficit over time. The legal structure of political struggles during the life of the interim administration do not over determine the course of those struggles; however, they are obviously a significant factor in enabling vs. hindering struggles to orient such arrangements toward greater democratization and a deeper conception of pluralism. The LTTE's vision appears to be oriented towards creating a hostile legal environment for such struggles, and instead, consolidating its current military authority with the legal stamp of the interim arrangements. We would like to highlight four symptoms of this vision in the proposal:

issues of democratic participation, issues regarding institutional pluralism, issues regarding ethnicity and community, and issues regarding the role of civil society.

First, let us begin by looking at some of the more familiar arenas of democratic participation and accountability - namely, the relationship between electoral mechanisms for voice, accountability and structures of governance. The LTTE proposes that there be an Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) with governance responsibilities for eight districts in the North and East. The proposal is that the ISGA be composed of members appointed by the LTTE, GOSL and the Muslim community of the region. Elections shall not be held in the course of the interim-agreement; the earliest we will see elections for ISGA seats is after five years of the interim administration when the immediate mandate of this proposal runs out and/or negotiations are reached for a final settlement.

Election, are, of course, neither the sole nor sufficient condition for democratization; nevertheless, they can be a

fundamental avenue for voice and accountability. An interim administration that is so insulated from electoral processes as suggested by the proposal risks creating an environment that is antithetical to free and fair elections even five years hence. In the past, governments have suspended basic democratic rights ostensibly for 'interim' periods alone, only to leave a legacy that has fundamentally dismembered the possibility of democratic mechanisms for the long term - For instance, JR's suspension of general elections for an executive presidency and a rigged referendum continues to have this pernicious and pervasive reach far beyond the duration of his own term in office. With this concern in mind then, rather than having all the seats on the ISGA be based purely on appointments (as the LTTE's proposal call for), the ISGA could, from the beginning, be composed by a balance between seats filled by internationally monitored elections, and seats filled by appointment. The interim-administration mandate itself could be structured to gradually change this balance in favor of elections where

every couple of years more of the ISGA seats previously filled by appointment become open to electoral contestation. This will also provide a potential window for parties outside the LTTE and the GOSL to participate in the ISGA. To some extent one can situate Lanka's historical movement toward independence in the first half of the last century as emerging from a gradualist approach along these lines - as with that colonial experience, this is hardly the ideal process; however, to the extent that some sort of interim administration that falls short of a more robust democratic structure is in the cards, then we should at least aim for this incremental, if hopefully decisive, orientation towards that more robust structure. It is a way in which democratic forces can get a step in the door in ways that will strengthen efforts to wedge it open wider and wider; enabling us to mobilize against having it shut in our face.

Secondly, lets us look at the lines of centralization and decentralization implicit in the formal lines of governance and accountability that structure the proposal. The ISGA is to have au-

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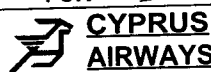
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thority over the entire North and East; district committees are to be created by the ISGA, their functions are to be delegated by the ISGA, and they can be suspended or terminated at the will of the ISGA (Article 14). In fact, the ISGA is to have plenary powers for the governance of the Northeast in a wide range of issues - from taxes to law and order, resettlement of IDPs/refugees to land policy (Article 9). The independence of the judiciary shall depend on the ISGA taking "appropriate measures" to ensure that independence (Article 10). Finances for the region will be controlled by a Financial Commission appointed by the ISGA; The NorthEast General Fund "shall be under the control of the ISGA"; Control over the NorthEast Reconstruction Fund (NERF) shall be "transferred to the ISGA"; and all monies not controlled by NERF shall be received into a special fund and the "ISGA shall control the Special Fund." (Article 11). The auditing of all these funds under the control of the ISGA shall be done by an Auditor General and an auditing firm appointed by the ISGA (Article 13).

This structure is such an embarrassingly conspicuous consumption of decision making authority that it may make even J.R. Jayawardane blush. If one of the rationales behind an interim administration is that it is intended to quell insecurity and create a constructive, confidence building environment for the peace process to move forward, then this structure is clearly directed making the LTTE secure and confident and all others insecure and crushed. Moreover, the GOSL's own anti-democratic legacy and brutally destructive role in the region means that relying on the GOSL to counterbalance the LTTE will not make the people feel any more secure or confident. As noted before, interim arrangements are born of compromise with legacies of authoritarianism. To this extent, circumstances may force an interim structure that can induce the buy-in of the powerful with some reserved seats on the ISGA for both the LTTE and the GOSL as the proposal envisions; however, if the interim administration is indeed intended as 'interim', then these compromises should be tailored and limited to the particular problems we confront rather than an unconditional surrender of any

democratic input. If the long term goal is in fact the demilitarization and democratization of the region, the interim-structure has to build in checks and balances that disaggregate and re-aggregate decision making lines in ways that deter sealing-in power in all pores of the society's institutional arrangements. There should be at least some elements that carry the promise of an internal dynamism that pushes against the ISGA's monopoly of authority. For instance, even if the LTTE and the GOSL will have some reserved seats that ensure that they have a dominant presence on the ISGA, other institutions could carry a more pluralistic structure - internally, as well as in terms of how they work as a whole. Rather than having ISGA appointed district committees, district level committees could be elected by internationally monitored electoral processes - monitored on all fronts, from the registering of political parties, through campaign periods to counting ballot boxes - and then financed in ways that retain independence and resist manipulation by the ISGA, rather than going the route of the clientage based hoax district bodies that we have had in the past (once again, the shadow of J.R.). Similarly, rather than have the ISGA control all economic decision making bodies, there could be a step towards more genuine economic democracy with provisions for those most impacted by particular policy areas to have a seat at the table; such actors could range from the relevant district committees to organizations such as unions and consumer co-operatives. Rather than an ISGA appointed human rights commission, there could be a human rights agreement with jurisdiction over all parties, and an international human rights body with monitoring and adjudicatory authority over all human rights related issues. Rather than an ISGA appointed judiciary, for all non-human rights issues the region could strengthen the current range of institutions operating in the region to create a legal pluralism framework where citizens have genuine freedom to choose between alternative fora, the GOSL system, the LTTE system, or, if relevant to the matter at hand, the personal laws system.

Third, let us examine the assumptions regarding ethnicity and community suggested in the proposal. Not only does the LTTE garner itself sole representative status for all Tamils, it also implicitly and explicitly suggests that other communities in the region could also be framed through parallel models of homogenized representation. It also privileges ethnicity as the overarching axes of social solidarity and political community. If the interim administration was intended to pave the way for a new model of pluralism for Lanka, the interim administration proposal's disregard for the rights of entrenched minorities suggests a model of ethnic majoritarianism within the North and East, but equally, for the rest of the country. The proposal implicitly suggests a hermetically sealed administrative structure whose approach to pluralism is in the erection of ethnically majoritarian shields between the regional and the national. Yet the dynamics of the lives of the majority of Lankans are defined through social relations that refuse rigid boundaries. The opening of the A9 became such an iconic marker of the potential for peace precisely because it allowed the free movement of people and the re-establishing of ties of community and citizenship, commerce and popular culture. Against this backdrop, the interim proposal reflects an almost myopic aspiration to homogenous communities. Yet, as we noted in an editorial one year ago, it is precisely the structuring of institutional arrangements in ways that privilege homogenous political communities that renders hybrid territorial spaces a dangerous place for minorities and marginalized communities. If location in different territories has problematic distributive consequences, we should seek to further loosen rather than entrench links between political 'community' and the rights and privileges that attach to particular territories. Thus we may want to encourage inter-communal territorial migration by making proactive efforts to ensure that Tamils feel they can live in safety and dignity in Sinhalese dominated areas, or that Muslims can do the same in Tamil dominated areas and so on. Any interim structure has to not only look inward within regional administrative structures, but it also has to look horizon-

tally at inter-regional and sub regional linkages - and ensure security and cultivate openness to that fluid, ongoing recasting of the demography and demands of pluralism.

It is important to note that while we have spoken primarily of ethnicity, the analysis extends to all 'minorities', whether they are rendered political 'minorities' by hierarchies, distinctions and distributive relations constituted around axes such as 'political affiliation', 'caste', 'gender', 'language', 'religion' or other terrain of marginalization. As noted earlier, privileging territorial walls that enhance power attaching to regional administrative authorities makes those communities that cannot control regional power even more vulnerable to majority chauvinism and political dominance within particular administrative units; the walls seal in unjust social relations. In such a context, vesting all political authority on territorially constituted ad-

ministrative boundaries equates these administrative walls with self-determination of the community within that unit. The implicit assumptions about homogenous community that defines this understanding of self-determination, advances the pretence that the only concerns about hierarchy and injustice that we should worry about are those outside those walls; that this understanding of self-determination builds walls that protect us from those concerns, i.e., that, in effect, there are no fundamental social conflicts that call into question the legitimacy of the ISGA's authority. The LTTE's proposal that the administrative unit will be based on secularism is a case in point - as the Indian experience of the use of the uniform civil code in anti-Muslim mobilization has demonstrated, secularism can often be precisely the tool for an anti-minority position. As Marx showed with such biting wit in his essay engaging with legal frameworks in

On the Jewish Question, the ostensible promise of liberal rights guarantees, such as state secularism, can be precisely the masking (and even entrenching) of deep social differences and substantive inequalities in the name of formal neutrality. In the North and East, we need to be ever vigilant about the fact that the more we define self-determination and pluralism in terms of rigid (ostensibly neutral) walls around that administrative unit, the deeper we entrench minority vulnerability - both within that unit, but also, by extension, in the rest of Lanka.

Fourth, and most significantly, let us look at the role the proposal envisions for civil society. If one of the principle casualties of the past two decades of war has been an assault on civil society, then one of the precise functions of an interim period prior to the adoption of a new constitution is to provide the enabling conditions for the emergence of a vibrant critical civil society.



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This should be a period of demobilization and demilitarization with more and more areas of public life reverting to civilian control; a ceasefire is more than the silencing of guns - this hiatus represented by interim arrangements is also a period for the military authorities to recede, and for institutions of civil society to come forward. Yet the LTTE proposal seems directed precisely at the reverse. One of the most telling indicators of the disregard for popular participation is that the only references to robust engagement by civil society institutions that the LTTE calls on to legitimize its position is in the preamble. Namely, an invocation of the 1976 Vaddukkodai Resolution - a 25 year old edict, and one that gave a mandate to the TULF rather than the LTTE. It is deeply ironic that the preamble also deligitimizes the 1972 and 1978 constitution on the grounds that in those instances the Tamil community was not actively involved in those efforts with an apparent unself-conscious disregard for the fact that the LTTE is continuing the tradition of the SLFP in 1972 and the UNP in 1978 because there is no active involvement of the Tamil community in the LTTE effort in 2003. Instead an effort to use interim administrations to demilitarize and democratize in meaningful ways would create provision for intellectual freedom and independent student organizations in regional universities; it would make explicit commitments to a free press and media pluralism; it would commit to not interfere with freedom of association so that institutions that range from the regions' long tradition of peace committees, to more recently constituted NGOs, to the potential introduction of new regional political parties could thrive without political interference. The preamble to the proposal could also convey the propriety it places on this with the LTTE, GOSL and other players in the region admitting past abuses, and agreeing to hold themselves accountable to institutions such as international human rights monitoring bodies, as well as local accountability avenues such as a free media to guard against future abuses. Civil society has been brutally crushed by all players in the region, from the GOSL and the LTTE - in this beleaguered environment, these suggestions

just noted are but a few gestures to help create the possibility for a robust and independent civil society to emerge. Civil Society is perhaps the paradigmatic arena where a sole focus on legal arrangements is patently insufficient. For instance, it will take many years before the region has built a sufficient sense of security for civil society to reclaim the public sphere. However the interim administration structure is a window of opportunity to begin that process and it is incumbent that we push the legal framework as much as possible to increase the chances that the interim period shows us the light at the end of the tunnel, rather than shutting it off forever.

The four broad points noted above do not constitute a comprehensive clause by clause analysis of the LTTE proposal for an interim administration; we merely highlight some key issues that we consider symptomatic of the proposal's vision of democracy and pluralism. Not only can more be said about these issues, there are also other elements of the proposal that need to be engaged with and discussed in more detail but that more extended analysis is beyond the scope of this editorial.

In closing it is important to situate the preceding analysis in a note about the role of law and legal rights more broadly. We cannot, as the old left sometimes did, dismiss the legal as mere reflection of the economic superstructure, or as the new left sometimes does, dismiss the legal as merely a fetishism with abstract rules rather than struggles over the politics of culture. In fact, law, such as the framework of the interim administration, can be so important to engage with because, in part, it can be a terrain for battles with and about what constitutes economic value and cultural meanings, and the distributional stakes in alternative institutional arrangements. Our engagement with the interim legal structure is an effort to push towards institutional arrangements whose gravitational pull will be in favor of efforts that deepen democracy. That said, however, it should also be noted that all the formal rights and progressive legal arrangements cannot in themselves deliver democracy or pluralism - i.e., rather than fetishize law, we should see the structure of interim arrangements as but one

terrain for struggles over democracy and pluralism; broader social movements need to mobilize and engage in legal terrains, but we should not allow the quest for improved legal arrangements to monopolize the terrain of struggle, and not allow the ostensible promise of legal guarantees cloud our analysis of social relations. Nonetheless, it is in that context that the distribution of the proposal is to be welcomed by anyone concerned about democracy in Sri Lanka - the proposal is not merely a set of abstract rules; rather, it sets forth a vision for the future, and to that extent we can try (as we have attempted to here) to draw the proposal into a discussion about alternative visions of the future, a conversation unpacking the conception of self-determination implicit in the proposal and its underlying assumptions regarding community and pluralism.

As noted earlier, in the South the discussion of the interim proposal has been truncated by dominant political voices that argue that sovereignty and security are at stake vs. those who argue that peace and prosperity are at stake. We would like to steer the debate back to argue that it is the shape and possibilities of democracy and pluralism that is at stake, and unfortunately, rather than being a step towards deepening democracy and pluralism, the interim proposal suggests a rather impoverished vision of pluralism, and an actively hostile approach to democracy. We ground our interpretation of the proposal in our reading of what's between the lines, as much as what is in the lines of the text; Looking then at both text and (con)text, we would argue that there is a certain grammar to how democracy and pluralism are both fundamentally truncated in this vision. Ideally, interim arrangements should be conceived as a contribution towards building a path that has a built in slide towards an irrevocable, if incremental, movement towards a more democratic and pluralistic destination. Unfortunately, the proposal currently on the table digs trenches around entrenched authority and only makes it even more difficult to build alternative paths.

[1]The peace process itself was controlled by a few powerful but non-representative actors on the Sri Lankan po-

(continued on next page)

TULF in crisis

The crisis that has hit the leadership of the once most popular Tamil political party, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), is likely to end in courts in due course. This follows a stormy Central Committee meeting held Sunday, 30 November, at the party headquarters in Colombo which, amidst scenes of violent behaviour among leading figures of the party, ended in uproar with conflicting claims and counter-claims as to what took place at the meeting.

Following the meeting, Mr Sambanthan claimed that the no-confidence move against the President was passed by 25 votes in favour with 10 against, and therefore Mr Sangaree was no longer leader of the party. However, Mr Sangaree, who presided at the meeting, claimed that no such resolution was adopted and he still remained President of the party. He further claimed that under the party's Constitution, the Central Working Committee had no power to remove any key official, let alone the president of the party.

At the meeting which lasted more than 8 hours a faction headed by the party's General Secretary and Parliamentarian R. Sampanthan and Joseph Pararajasingham, an MP from the eastern province, sought to oust the party's President V. Ananathasangaree as leader of the party by adopting a no-confidence motion against him primarily on the ground that he had acted in contravention of the policy of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), of which the



TULF is a constituent member, by refusing to accept that the LTTE is the 'sole representative of the Tamil people'. Mr Sangaree's position is that he has already acknowledged the LTTE as being the sole party to represent the Tamil people in the peace process and in the Norwegian facilitated negotiations with the Government. However, he was not in a position to accept the 'sole representative' role of the LTTE in all matters that concern the Tamil people. If he did so, he contended that there was no justification for the existence of the TULF as separate political party.

It would seem that the LTTE leadership, which had become angry with Mr Sangaree's reluctance to accept its claim to being the 'sole representative' of the Tamils, wanted him ousted from being President of the TULF.

At an earlier Central Committee meeting held in July this year an attempt to oust him failed and Mr Sangaree emerged unscathed with a

staggering majority endorsing his leadership. Since then, it is alleged by his supporters that members of the Central Committee have been subjected to tremendous pressure and intimidation to support the move to oust him. Resolutions calling upon him to step down from his post had been passed by the party's branches in Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara, but Mr Sangaree's supporters assert these resolutions were orchestrated at improperly summoned meetings.

It is now learnt that moves are afoot to appoint a disciplinary committee to probe charges against the TULF president, in what observers believe is a move to expel him from the party or from his post.

The charge-sheet against Mr. Anandasangaree will accuse him of violating the TNA policy that recognizes the LTTE as the sole representatives of the Tamils.

TULF MP Joseph Pararajasingham told The Sunday Times (Colombo) that the party's action against Mr. Anandasangaree would depend on the report of the disciplinary committee to be appointed soon. He said the no-confidence resolution passed against Mr. Anandasangaree at the Central Committee was valid and it was moved after repeated complaints from district organisations that the president of the party was violating the party policy of backing the LTTE as the sole voice of the Tamil people.

Meanwhile, Mr Sangaree charged that party general secretary R. Sampanthan had deviated from the usual practice and prepared the agenda arbitrarily for Central Committee meeting where the no-faith resolution against him was moved. "It is mandatory on the part of the general secretary to consult the president at all times, but he did not consult me this time," he said. He said that at the said meeting, as the presiding President, he had upheld an objection by a member who pointed out that under the constitution of the party, the Central Committee had no power to remove a key official, and therefore it would be unconstitutional for the Committee even to entertain a motion for the removal of the President. "At this stage Mr. Sampanthan usurped

(continued from page 19)

political stage. Political parties like the PA and the SLMC were not given a seat at the table - but more important input from critical civil society elements, minorities within minorities, political dissidents and others were actively excluded; legitimates dissenting voices calling for human rights characterized as spoilers. In fact, in the name of a fragile peace, the process appeared to legitimize and even celebrate a process characterized by impunity and the abuse of power on many fronts - ranging from the GOSL's economic policies deepening inequality and attacking the most vulnerable sectors, to the

LTTE's military policies of child recruitment and political assassinations. While it is clear that no right thinking person in Sri Lanka can want a return to war, many also found that the peace process was, in sadly significant ways, "a war by another name" in the amount of brutality it condoned in the name of peace. See *Running Away From Peace* by Arjuna Parakrama, Lines, Vol. I, No. 4 (November 2003).

[2] Lines, November 2002.

From "Lines" (November 2003) - <http://www.lines-magazine.org/> - the authors of this article. Vasuki Nesiah and S. Nanthikesan, are co-editors of "Lines".

the powers of the President and asked someone to propose and second the motion in spite of my protests. There was commotion at this stage and I had no option other than adjourning the meeting indefinitely. In the commotion that followed Mr. Sampanthan must have counted me also as having voted for the motion. After that I objected to signatures being obtained from some members for which I protested. My interest was to prevent the Members from being exposed to grave risk. At this stage Mr. Sampanthan left the party Head Quarter and went to Mr. Joseph Pararasingham's house where I am told that signatures of a few members were obtained and some signatures were forged. Above all I was presiding over the meeting and it was I who should have put the motion to vote and not Sampanthan the Secretary of the Party. If that is the position how can Mr. Sampanthan claim that the no-confidence motion was passed. In fairness to me, the one who built up the party against several odds, when several others were reluctant to step into the office, Mr. Sampanthan must tell the truth. The T.U.L.F. was founded and built up by honest men. I have a sacred duty to protect the party of which I am also a founder. The most honourable thing for some of them is to quit the party as for me I will never become a traitor to the cause for which it was founded. I will serve the party till I breathe my last," Mr. Sangaree said.

In the meantime, Mr Sangaree has written to the party's secretary, R. Sampanthan asking him to refrain from convening a meeting of the Central Committee on December 14 as he (Anandasangaree) has not authorised it. "You have neither consulted me or obtained my advice in this regard nor have I requested or authorised or advised you to convene such a meeting, the holding of which is therefore unconstitutional, irregular and illegal," the TULF president said. Anandasangaree has asked Sampanthan to consult him and obtain his advise and consent regarding the convening and the holding of any such meeting and the date and place at which it may be held. He said that he understood through media reports the move to convene the said meeting on Decem-

ber 14 at the residence of Mr. Chandranehru's Ampara residence.

Reacting to the attempted ouster of Mr Sangaree and the crisis that has hit the TULF, Mangayarkarasi Amirthalingam, widow of slain TULF leader Appapillai Amirthalingam, in an interview with the 'Asian Tribune' stated that it was unfortunate that a section of the members of her late husband's party wanted to bring the party under the 'jackboot' of the LTTE that killed her husband, a founder member of the party. Mrs. Amirthalingam claimed that it was the TULF that represented the aspirations of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka and all over the world. Normally leading a low profile life after the assassination of her husband, Mrs. Amirthalingam was in Sri Lanka last August to be present at the 76th birth anniversary celebrations of the late Mr. Amirthalingam, held against the wishes of the LTTE leadership at the Saraswathy Hall, Colombo at which Mr. Anandasangaree spoke and paid tribute to TULF's late leader.

Bala back in action

The Liberation Tigers' theoretician, Mr. Anton Balasingham, whose deteriorating health compelled him to take several months of rest this year, is now well enough to resume his duties, according to a report in the TamilNet website datelined 18 November. Mr. Balasingham would travel to Kilinochchi in the Vanni in January next year to meet with LTTE leader Mr. Vellupillai Pirapaharan and other senior commanders to discuss the movement's peace strategy, the report said.

Mr. Balasingham led the LTTE's negotiating team to six rounds of talks with the Sri Lankan government, and his doctors had in the past expressed concern about the impact of the heavy travel on his health. The 64 year old, who lives in London, and his wife Adele, travelled monthly to Bangkok, Tokyo, Berlin and Oslo, for several days of talks. Mr. Balasingham, who suffers from diabetes, coronary conditions and has a transplanted kidney, was advised by his doctors earlier this year against long distance travel, after being taken ill whilst visiting Kilinochchi earlier this year.

After several months of rest at his home in south London, it would appear that Mr. Balasingham has recovered sufficiently to resume duties.

Exploring Human Liberation

In a recently released book in Tamil, Viduthalai ("Liberation"), Mr. Anton Balasingham, theoretician for Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), explores in depth, theories from ancient philosophers to seek meanings for Human Life, History and Liberation, according to a report in the TamilNet website datelined 22 November.

In the Preface to the book, Mr. Balasingham states that the book is a compilation of edited and enhanced version of articles that he published in "Velicham (Light)" publication in Jaffna in the early 1990s. These articles were written on request by Head of the LTTE Literary Wing, Puthuvai Ratnathurai, with the objective of inspiring new and revolutionary thought processes in the minds of NorthEast student population, the author adds.

The first chapter details the contribution of late Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Mr.M.G.Ramachandran to the TamilEelam struggle, particularly to LTTE's efforts. The second chapter documents details of the meeting between late Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and LTTE leader Pirapaharan. The secret accord that was agreed between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Pirapaharan on 28 July 1987 was of historical significance to Tamil struggle and hence the details have to be documented, Mr Balasingham says at the beginning of this chapter.

The rest of the book draws on thinking of Freud, Marx, Hegel and several other philosophers to attempt to answer basic and fundamental questions in human existence.

The book was released by Fairmax Publishing Ltd, P.O.Box 2454, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3LJ, England.

CJ probe request declined

The Commonwealth Secretariat has spiked a request by the Sri Lanka Government to help set up a panel of judges from Commonwealth member-states to hear allegations against judges of the

supreme court or higher courts in Sri Lanka, particularly those that have been made against the present Chief Justice, Sarath de Silva, who heads the island's judiciary.

The Secretariat has informally told the Government that its request is "unprecedented" and indicated that it did not want to be a part of it, Commonwealth sources said.

At present allegations against judges of the higher courts in Sri Lanka are inquired into by parliament under provisions of the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe is said to have made the proposal to have Commonwealth judges in order to give such inquiries greater credibility and remove any charges of political bias.

While the Commonwealth Secretariat provides assistance to member countries by providing expertise in law drafting, understanding trade laws and regulations of the World Trade Organisation and in honing the negotiating skills of countries that still lack them in a world of globalised trade, it wishes to stay away from involvement in inquiries into Commonwealth judges.

Some years ago, when Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad called for the help of judges from the Commonwealth to sit on a panel inquiring into the conduct of a Malaysian judge, the secretariat is believed to have informally advised member governments against acceding to the request.

However, President J. R. Jayewardene is understood to have ignored Secretariat advice and nominated Chief Justice Parinda Ranasinghe to the panel. If the government wishes to go ahead with the idea of Commonwealth judges hearing allegations, it might still approach individual Commonwealth countries.

The government's attempted move to involve the Commonwealth Secretariat came in the wake of its recent attempt to impeach the current Chief Justice by presenting a motion to parliament signed by a large number of MPs. This move was frustrated

and pre-empted by the sudden and unexpected prorogation of Parliament by President Kumaratunga. The government's ill-timed attempt to impeach the Chief Justice also came under heavy fire from the legal and judicial fraternity, including the Bar Association of Sri Lanka primarily because it occurred so soon after a bench of Supreme Court Judges headed by the Chief Justice gave judgement in favour of the President who had sought a ruling regarding the constitutionality of herself taking over the subjects which she had already allocated to cabinet ministers.

End to statelessness

More than 6,000 Tamils of Indian origin registered themselves as Sri Lankan citizens in recent days as part of a 10-day programme by the Ceylon Workers Congress to enable them to gain citizenship. The programme was supported by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The UNHCR in a press release said: "the registration scheme overcomes a critical and long-running problem for an estimated 300,000 Tamils brought to Sri Lanka since the 1820s to work on estates: their inability to claim Sri Lankan citizenship. In October this year, parliament passed legislation that allowed these stateless people, along with their children, to receive Sri Lankan citizenship. The campaign will cover both those persons who applied for an Indian passport under the so-called Sirimavo-Shastri Pact in 1964 but who never left Sri Lanka, as well as people who have lived their entire life without a passport or any other identification document. The 10-day registration programme puts the new legislation into effect."

UNHCR Representative Mr. Neill Wright welcomed the Government's initiative that provides Tamils of Indian origin with the legal protections that come with citizenship. "Persons without citizenship are denied some of the most basic rights and entitlements: they cannot open a bank account, own property or work for the government; they cannot ob-

tain an identity card, a birth certificate, a marriage certificate or a passport; if they leave the country they cannot return. For almost 200 years, this has been the predicament of a great many Tamils of Indian origin living in Sri Lanka. The new legislation corrects this injustice," he said.

The 10-day registration programme, which finished on Sunday December 7, enabled people to register for citizenship at Ceylon Workers Congress offices in more than 50 locations across the country. More than 300 volunteers have given their time to support the scheme.

During a one day training seminar for the volunteers, many older persons who had been working on tea plantations for their entire lives told stories of the hardship they have endured. Many cited the law passed by Parliament in October as an end to a long struggle for recognition.

Most of the stateless up-country Tamils have never known any other country than Sri Lanka and consider it their home. An elderly woman, who prefers to remain anonymous, stated: "This is a great day for us. This is our home, my children and grandchildren have grown up here, gone to school, made friends and married. I no longer need to feel like neglected, poor and sick relatives, who despite the smiles are not welcome here. Now I am able to look each other in their eyes, knowing that we belong here and have our basic human rights protected by the State I feel like a real person for the first time in my life."

The UNHCR is also mandated to work for the reduction and elimination of statelessness around the world, in accordance with the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. While basic human rights of stateless persons should be respected in their country of residence, statelessness itself creates vulnerability. Stateless persons hold an unequal status in their societies.

Norway's engagement in diplomacy or duplicity?

Kethesh Loganathan

The announcement by the Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Vidar Helgesen, at a media briefing in Colombo on Friday 15th November, that Norway will "go home and wait" till there is clarity as to who is holding responsibility on the side of the government, was theatrics at its best - or, worst, depending on how one looks at it. But, no one can deny that it was plain theatrics and a case of playing to the gallery. The timing as well as the manner in which the decision to temporarily halt their role as a facilitator was effected has also been widely interpreted as an attempt by Norway at shaping events in the national political scene. Or, to put it another way, to stir the boiling political cauldron.

While it is perfectly acceptable for Norway as a mediator (it has long since ceased to be just a "postman") in shaping events in the interest of advancing the peace process, provided it is within its mandate, Norway's conduct as a third party mediator is beginning to be perceived as being unprincipled, partial and counter-productive. Let me elaborate.

The operative section in the cavalier declaration made by the Norwegian deputy foreign minister reads: "As far as our mandate goes, we have one clear conclusion: peace talks could have started tomorrow, provided there was clarity about who is holding responsibility on behalf of the Government for the continuation of the Ceasefire Agreement. Until last week there was such clarity. Today there is no such clarity." Hence, the decision to go home and "wait".

I see here instances of both perfidy and duplicity, disguised as pragmatic diplomacy and political realism, behind Norway's announcement. The question is, could peace talks have indeed started "tomorrow", if not for the political crisis following President Chandrika Kumaratunga's move to assume the portfolio of defence and internal security, as the Norwegian deputy foreign minister hinted at the press briefing? On the con-

trary, it is common knowledge that talks were not expected to commence before the end of this year. The Government spokesman and Chief Negotiator, Prof G.L. Peiris only indicated that the Government had identified gaps between the LTTE proposals and its own proposal for the setting up of an interim administration for the North-East and was prepared to negotiate.

The Prime Minister also announced, following the political crisis, that the parliament would be the "focal" point for negotiations in a bid to get the President to reconvene parliament. The fact that the parliament was totally excluded from the peace process till then is another matter. Be that as it may, the actual timing for direct negotiations was scheduled to take place early next year. Those in the know are also fully aware that the Government itself needed time to sensitise public opinion to make it more receptive towards the LTTE proposals. This was to enable the Government to give in to the LTTE's pursuit of legitimacy for its politico-military control over the North-East, in the name of relief and development. The fact of the matter is that neither the Government nor the LTTE displayed too much haste in commencing negotiations "tomorrow", as Norway has indicated. This is the political reality and Norway was certainly fully aware of this. Hence, to assert that negotiations could have commenced "tomorrow", if not for the political crisis is a case of perfidy. Secondly, Norway's assertion that there was no clarity as to who was responsible for the peace process is somewhat surprising. This is particularly so, since it was widely reported that in the two meetings that the Norwegian delegation headed by its Deputy Foreign Minister had with President Chandrika Kumaratunga, assurances were given by the President that she, as the Head of State, Commander-in-Chief and the Minister of Defence, stood committed to implementing the ceasefire agreement. That she had some reservations about the manner in which the ceasefire agreement

came into existence and on matters relating to its implementation and monitoring is another matter. Be that as it may, the President went public and issued strict instructions to the security forces to strictly observe the ceasefire and to allow the LTTE cadres to engage in political activities in government-controlled areas. In fact, even the LTTE leadership demonstrated diplomacy in not wanting to be seen to be taking sides in the political crisis brewing in Colombo's political cauldron. As to what they thought about it in private is also another matter.

What the Norwegians have failed to understand is that given the political and constitutional dispensation in Sri Lanka following the last General Elections, where the Executive President and the Prime Minister belong to two different political formations, cohabitation is the only way available to forward the peace process. As such, there can be no case of a single source of authority and responsibility. What is needed is shared authority and responsibility, as Dr Sumansiri Liyanage argued in a recent article. The notion of a single source of authority could well apply in the case of the LTTE which is essentially an individual-centred authoritarian regime, with claims to be the "sole representative" of the Tamil people. Norway certainly should not expect other parties that they seek to bring together to be uniformly authoritarian and to assert their "soleness" in representing an entire people - whether they be Sinhalese, Tamils or Muslims. The very notion of "sole representative" and "sole authority" is an anachronism and undemocratic, particularly if one is to make the peace process inclusive and broad-based so as to ensure its durability and sustainability.

Another instance of partiality and duplicity on the part of Norway is that no decision was taken by it to suspend its role as a mediator as a means of exerting pressure or as an expression of a political reality when, for instance, the LTTE decided to suspend its participation from official negotiations in April this year. That the LTTE sought to do so precisely at the moment that human rights conditionalities (or, "benchmarks") and core political issues were being brought into the agenda of the talks was conveniently ignored. Incidentally, Prof Nicholas Haysom, the South African Constitutional expert and former member of

ANC and advisor to Nelson Mandela, had observed several times in discussions in Colombo that he was disappointed that nothing was being done by Norway to prevent the LTTE from walking in and out of talks when it suited them.

It must also be noted that Norway adopted a studied silence when the LTTE launched its spree of political killings and child conscriptions, particularly following its decision to suspend its participation in official Track One negotiations. Norway felt constrained to express concern only when civil society and other international State and non-State actors began demonstrating their consternation and condemnation over these alarming developments. Neither did Norway threaten to suspend its role as a facilitator/mediator when the LTTE simply ignored a ruling by the SLMM on the Kurangupanchankulam camp.

The problem of SLMM's ineffectiveness as a monitor and in "naming and shaming" the perpetrator, particularly in the case of political killings by the LTTE, once again stems from Norway's obsession with a sole source of authority and responsibility. Perhaps, Norway finds its less complicated and expedient to deal with "sole representatives" and a single source of authority. This is also manifest in Norway's decision to arrogate to itself the dual role of a mediator as well as monitor by heading the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM). That the mediator is also the monitor is quite unprecedented and is one of the major flaws in Sri Lanka's peace process.

The time has clearly come for Norway to take a close look at itself and ensure "clarity" about its own role and mandate, while "waiting" for the opportune moment to resume its role as a mediator. The time has also come for academics and intellectuals working in the sphere of conflict resolution, to take a close look at the role of Norway and its metamorphosis from that of a postman, to a mediator and, god-forbid, to that of a party to the conflict in Sri Lanka's protracted negotiations. A knee-jerk reaction branding as "spoilers" all those critical of Norway's handling or mis-handling of the peace process, simply will not do.

(The writer is a member of the Board of Directors of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) and Head of its Conflict & Peace Analysis Unit. The views expressed in this article are his own).

The grand old Tamil party in disarray

Prof.S.Ratnajeewan H.Hoole

Adding to their recent troubles, the Federal Party and its successor the TULF were in bad shape last Sunday, reduced to trading filth (broadcast for all to hear on Sakthi TV) in the backdrop of an exalted heritage. To any Tamil who remembers the glory days of the FP, it was heart-wrenching pain.

To many of us, the FP always will be the party of high principle. We recall fondly the men of impeccable honesty who laid its foundations - SJV, Vanniasingham, Naganathan, Kathiravetpillai, et al.

In the glory days, Ladies College girls came to Jaffna and stood in election campaign booths to give the party respectability. Men of great intellect and even clergymen worked for the party. Some of my fondest memories are of, as a boy, going as my mother's "escort" to the Satyagraha with all the ladies of our parish and singing hymns while some boisterous Satyagrahis chanted "Thookku Medai, Panju Meththai" (The gallows are a cotton mattress to us); of a cousin's delayed birthday party waiting for her father to come out of jail for his role in the Anti-Sri-campaign; of heroism as the Police unsuccessfully searched for Federal Party postage stamps hidden in a haystack.

The party even had the thrills of a spy story to grip our hearts - when underground because of the Srimavo government's detention orders, how that great scholar Fr. Thaninayagam (meaning Sole-Lord) sent telegraphic messages signed as Ekanayake; and how Naganathan (really a Hensman) who sang hymns at Church like a Luciano Pavarotti, escaped by train from Jaffna wearing my father's cassock.

Along with this nonviolence and bravado, subsisted defensive violence. I recall the panic at school on hearing the story during the riots in the late fifties that the Sinhalese are coming. Peter Somasundram, Jaffna MMC and

Post Master for the illegal FP postal service, organized the defence of Vavuniya with his rare expertise in the use of a shot gun.

As truckloads of men went in convoy down Chemmani Road to Vavuniya, senior boys playing cricket ran alongside shouting "Jey (Victory) for Tamils" and we too ran along shouting the same not quite knowing what Jey meant. During the riots, there were organized assaults on Sinhalese bakers and I remember getting some biscuits scattered in front of City Bakery down Hospital Road - my shocked parents were not convinced that my picking them up from the streets was a good excuse.

In the safe Jaffna of those days I went alone to a meeting at Muthiraichchanthai to hear SJV. The next speaker drew blood from his hand with a sharp instrument, touched the blood with his thumb, made a pottu out of it and swore not to give up until victory was achieved. I ran away terrified as we were invited to do the same.

Few who grew up in Jaffna then could not fail to feel some love and awe for the party even when in disagreement. But the party was really a mixed bag - Chelvanayakam's high principles by the side of the violent poetry and deeds of the younger crowd. Although it was a time when the Tamil Congress were the "traitors", Jaffna never had a monolithic electoral group. In the prestigious Jaffna electorate in particular, it was the 3-way race between the TC, FP and Alfred Duraiappah that gave the FP the chance of capturing the seat in 1970. But the FP was, relatively, the party of principle.

The many TC MPs would easily crossover - Thiagarajah, Arulampalam, et al. who voted with the SLFP as it imposed a new Constitution and Standardisation. Thus the monolithic TUF (later TULF) was built by incorporating the TC in G.G. Ponnambalam's

absence using some local TC-ers in Jaffna.

When GG arrived at the Jaffna Railway Station to disrupt the move, he was met by a huge delegation that garlanded him as Co-leader with SJV of the TULF and he, checkmated thus, grouchy returned to Colombo the same evening.

But by the eighties, as the party collapsed, even FP stalwarts began to cross-over - Rajathurai, Kanagratnam, et al.. Some Tamils kept deriding Muslims saying they are unreliable turn-coats (or turn-hats in Tamil phraseology), not seeing that we too had the same human failings. With this Tamil racism Muslim membership in the FP soon vanished and with it the party's liberal ethos. GG's son kept up the turn-coatism by writing vituperative tirades in the Sunday Times against the LTTE in the 1990s and then suddenly did a flip attacking anyone who had doubts about the LTTE.

Thus while the TULF was a weak amalgam of many, cornered into this monolith, the FP component was the real core that could command the respect of the people and lived among the people. It was natural that the TULF should fall victim to its own politics when in an even greater amalgam, all parties were forced into the TNA. The likeable Sambandan, it was reported in the press, shed tears when queried at the Indian High Commission as to why

he had suddenly changed policy. It was to save his life, he is quoted as saying. How could the TULF complain when in an earlier era they had done the same to the smaller parties in forming the TULF? Many original Federalists never liked the TNA whose MPs had lived in many parties and even contested against the TULF and lacked the standards of the old guard. TULF-ers felt they were ordered to take up policy positions by outsiders that they had to defend, in addition to taxation and child conscription.

This was the backdrop to Sangari's leadership. He had come to the TULF first contesting for the Colombo Municipality on behalf of the LSSP in 1959, then the Killinochchi parliamentary seat for the TC in 1970 and finally for the TULF, earning the prestige of getting the highest preference vote in 2001, with the least help from unethical practices freely used by others in the TNA. His candid view that the LTTE cannot claim to be the sole representatives, many agreed with. Grass roots workers facing the complaint from the public that the TULF would bring the LTTE back to Jaffna saw a leader in Anandasangari. His voice held out the hope of multiparty democracy; of the right to speak out. He seemed to have enough backing six months ago to defeat a move to oust him.

In the interim, forces against him

had gathered momentum. Alfonse Mary who had moved a motion of confidence in him at the earlier meeting, was queried in Batticaloa on his return and had to offer to resign and this time, given the reality, voted against Anandasangari. Those struggling to balance pressure on them against principled position, found it hard to function when Sangari openly offended the LTTE.

It was thus inevitable that he lost the vote on Sunday (30 Nov 2003): 25 against, 10 for and 2 abstentions. It was sadly the end of a great man; a brave man. The cousin of a man from the East who had been murdered, but now voted against Sangari, was angrily asked by Sangari how he could turn-coat like this.

The meeting ended up in party top-runners physically fighting each other over the recording of minutes.

The day also presumably marked the end of a grand old party that meant much to the Tamils. If Sangari goes to court as he has threatened to do, the party symbol may not be available for some time. It is now for Sambandan to cobble the party together again. He must not allow the animosity of recent days to cloud the principle that Sangari stood for - the independence of the TULF.

To do that takes courage. Without that courage, silence in retirement would be more dignified. I certainly wish Sambandan success. (Daily News)



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Sunday, November 16, 2003

* A committee appointed by the President and Prime Minister headed by United National Party (UNP) Chairman Malik Samarawickrema and Senior Director of the President's Office Mano Tittawella were locked in talks trying to end the present impasse. Prime Minister says he will support a National Front to revive the peace process.

* Elections in the North and the East if they are to continue to be merged were put off by the President until November 17, 2004 (Eastern Province) and December 01, 2004 (Northern Province). She took this action under Paragraph (b) of Sub Section (2) of Section 37 of the Provincial Councils Act No.42 of 1987. Gazette was issued on November 6, 2003. For the time being they continue to be merged and function as one Province.

* The second round of talks between the President Ms Chandrika Kumaratunge and Prime Minister Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe are expected to be held Tuesday at the Presidential office for the first time after Norway's pulling out of the peace process it has brokered twenty two months ago with a ceasefire agreement between the United National Front government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, political sources said. The talks between the leaders of the two major political parties are expected to find an amicable solution to resolve the current political crisis which followed by the unilateral action of the President in taking over three key ministries and pro-roguing the parliament for two weeks, political observers said. Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe has said he would attend the second round of talks with the President along with the leaders of the constituent parties in the ruling UNF, namely with Mr. Arumugam Thondaman of the Ceylon Workers Congress, Mr. Periyasamy Chandrasekaram of the Upcountry Peoples Front and Mr. Rauff Hakim of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress.

Monday, November 17, 2003

* Anura Bandaranaike says he has got the consent of 25 parliamentarians to prepare a letter to be sent to the President to remove Mahinda Rajapakse as the Leader of the Opposition in spite of both belonging to the same party - the SLFP, which is a constituent member of the People's Alliance (PA).

* The United National Front government's media spokesman and Constitutional Affairs Minister, Mr. G.L. Peiris, Monday said a conducive situation has been emerging for making decisions regarding the defense of the country. "The UNF has taken into consideration the French style constitutional arrangements in regard to defense of the country," said Mr. Peiris, addressing a press briefing Monday. Although different political parties have been in power no problem has arisen between the executive and the legislature in France, said Minister Mr. Peiris. He added that his government was prepared to negotiate on the defense issue. Without resolving the constitutional crisis that followed the take over of the three key ministries by the President, the peace process could not be taken forward. Mr. Peiris expressed optimism that the current political crisis could be resolved with the President this week and said that the government did not want to precipitate a crisis that would lead to a general election.

Tuesday, November 18, 2003

* "There was no breakthrough in today's talks between the President and the Prime Minister", a senior Sri Lankan government official in Colombo said Tuesday. He said that it was agreed during the meeting to appoint a committee of officials to "work out the details of future working arrangements under which the President and Prime Minister could work together on the important national issues". The second round of talks between President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe to explore means for resolving Sri Lanka's constitutional crisis began at 10.30 a.m. Tues-

NEWS TRACK

day.

* V. Anandasangaree, a Tamil Member of Parliament (MP) and President of Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), declined an invitation to meet with Sri

Lanka's President Ms. Kumaratunge saying that such a meeting will create misunderstanding among Tamil people, a popular Jaffna Tamil daily Uthayan reported.

* Government looks at French model with regards the management of defence. In this, there is a National Defence Council, which is chaired by the President but with the day-to-day affairs being handled by the Government.

Wednesday, November 19, 2003

* Parliament meets at 10 am. Speaker Joseph Michael Perera reads out Notice summoning parliament signed by 130 parliamentarians and citing a similar situation when Anura Bandaranaike was the Speaker. On the earlier occasion Bandaranaike argued that since sovereignty is vested with the people and the people elect the parliamentarians, parliament is sovereign and it can be summoned by the Speaker.

* Budget presented at 2.30 pm. UNF government presents third budget. "It is the government's wish, and of all right thinking people of Sri Lanka, that no further political crises be created which will derail the existing process and that all political issues, if any, be sorted out by objective consultation and decision," said the United National Front government's Finance Minister, Mr. K.N. Choksy, in his 2004 Budget speech delivered in parliament Wednesday evening, parliamentary sources said. "The establishment of a dialogue with the LTTE and the existence of ceasefire agreement signed by the government and the LTTE after about twenty years have contributed to [the] resuscitation of the country's economy," said Mr. Choksy.

* Thought has been given to the formation of a National Defence Committee chaired by the President in which the Prime Minister and the Security Forces Chiefs and the Police Chief are part of.

* Solheim briefing the government of India on the current situation in Sri Lanka refuted all reports that claimed Norwegians had withdrawn from their facilitator role. "We have only put ourselves on hold", Solheim is reported as saying, while stressing they were waiting "for political clarity to be re-established" between the Southern parties in Sri Lanka, to resume their role as mediator. He also said the SLMM was continuing with its duties. He further said Norway was aware of India's concerns about the LTTE wanting full control of the territorial waters and marine resources in the sea separating the two countries. However Solheim said the LTTE had only stated its position and did recognize that negotiations would have to follow. Solheim ruled out the possibility of a new state for Sri Lankan Tamils emerging through the process and said the international community was aware of India's concerns.

* The First Secretary of the Japanese Embassy in Sri Lanka, Mr. Hideyuki Onishi, Wednesday afternoon declared open the renovated building of the Madduvil Srivetpillai Community Center in Chavakachcheri in the Jaffna district at a cost of one million rupees funded by the people and the Government of Japan as a token of friendship and cooperation between Japan and Sri Lanka. The implementing agency was the Association of Medical Doctors of Asia (AMDA), sources said.

The community center building was destroyed in the military operation launched by the Sri Lanka Army in the year 2000, civil sources said.

* The central dispensary and hospital located in the village of Mahilavettuvan, 30 km West of Batticaloa town in territory controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in the Batticaloa district, which was damaged by the military actions of the Sri Lanka Army in 1987 and destroyed later the same year by the Indian Peace Keeping Force, recommenced operation Tuesday. Following the destruction of the hospital, the people of the area faced grave diffi-

culties in meeting their health needs and had to visit the Batticaloa teaching hospital to get treatment for even minor ailments. But following the Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, the North East Community Organization for Restoration and Development (NECORD) assisted the reconstruction of the dispensary and hospital at a cost of 3.3 million rupees. A doctor's quarters has also been constructed.

Thursday, November 20, 2003

* A working arrangement between the President and the government - most probably in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), is on the cards to form a national consensus to take the peace process and the economy forward, Government Spokesman G.L. Peiris said. Peiris said the committee comprising UNP Chairman Malik Samarawickrema, Prime Minister's Secretary Bradman Weerakoon, President's Secretary W.J. S. Karunaratne and President's Senior Advisor Mano Tittawela were working in that direction. The committee met today and is scheduled to meet tomorrow as well to sort out matters.

On the three key Ministries, which were taken over by the President on November 4, Prof. Peiris said that the Prime Minister had not asked them back. He had only maintained that the person in charge of the peace process should have full responsibility with regards the process. There should be clarity with regards the process. He added that simply talking of a national government was not realistic. 'Allocating several Ministries for the members of the PA will not solve the problem. We should go beyond that and reach a national consensus,' he stressed.

* The LTTE commences celebrations to mark 'Heroes Week' to commemorate LTTE cadres who have lost their lives in the struggle for a Tamil homeland from today until Thursday, November 27. Celebrations are to be held all over the north and the east.

* Meanwhile, the European Parliament has expressed concern over a power struggle between the President and the PM which has

stalled peace talks with Tamil Tigers and hurt the nation's economy. Members of the European Union assembly passed a resolution that welcomed "the bold steps taken by the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) to create the conditions in which negotiations may lead to a political solution and a lasting peace."

But the Strasbourg parliament expressed "its deep concern about the recent developments in Sri Lanka which threaten the internationally supported peace process, notably the decisions by President Chandrika Kumaratunga to sack" her defence, interior and information ministers, and to prorogue parliament. "The House urges the president to work together with the democratically elected government and its prime minister," it added. It pointed "the need, more than ever, for a real bipartisan commitment and approach to securing a political settlement in Sri Lanka between the major parties."

Friday, November 21, 2003

* Tittawela-Samarawickrema Committee talks held for second time to finalise the MoU. There is a suggestion to form a government of National consensus, which would continue for one year with the emphasis being on development. The committee also reportedly decided to ask the premier to take charge of the peace process and that peace talks should proceed without delay.

* The People's Alliance (PA) said that the President was willing to put the past behind and make a fresh start with the UNF Government. The four-member committee has to submit their report by December 15 to form a National Government for reconstruction and rehabilitation. President assures business community that there will be no dissolution of parliament unless inevitable circumstances compelled her to do so.

* The main opposition Peoples Alliance said that the President Ms Chandrika Kumaratunge and Prime Minister Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe have agreed to conclude the current high level talks now being held between their advisors to end the political uncertainty by 15th of December. "Thereafter the President intends to form an all party-government to bring the current political crisis to an end," said PA media spokesman Dr. Sarath Amunugama at a press briefing held in Colombo.

* Presidential senior advisor Mr. Mano Tittawela and UNP Chairman Mr. Malik Samarawickrema have been conducting talks to find a way to sort out differences between the executive presidency and parliamentary legislature which followed with the dismissal of three UNF ministers and taking over their ministries defense, interior and mass communication by the President.

Meanwhile the UNF government media spokesman and Constitutional Affairs Minister Mr. G.L. Peiris said at a press briefing that both the Prime Minister and the President have been trying their best to find an amicable settlement to the constitutional crisis. «My government is prepared to go even beyond the Liam Fox agreement signed by the President and Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe thus signing a Memorandum of Understanding by them in the future,» said Mr. Peiris. Mr. Liam Fox was a British Minister under the then Conservative Government who brokered an agreement between President Ms Chandrika Kumaratunge and Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe when he was the leader of the opposition before 2001 general election to bring out an agreement between these two leaders to find a consensus in finding a political solution to the ethnic problem during the period the President's party People Alliance had a majority in then parliament, political sources reminded.

Professor Peiris further said the President and Prime Minister would review the findings of the Tittawela-Malik committee when they meet for another round of talks in few weeks' time. The MOU expected to be arrived at between the two major political parties cannot be considered as a basis for a national government. However to could help both parties to work with better understanding in the spheres of peace and economic stability of the country, Mr. Peiris said.

Saturday, November 22, 2003

* Tittawela-Samarawickrema Committee identifies four areas in which they can work towards a national consensus: Peace proc-

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ess, strengthening of democratic institutions, good governance, economic-social development. They have also focused on four key issues connected with the peace process: Security, Oslo's role, SLMM's role, and how to bring the LTTE back to the negotiating table.

* The new building of the Sampalthivu Agrarian Services Centre (ASC), located in the village of Aththimodda, about 7 k.m. north of Trincomalee town, and reconstructed at a cost of 2.9 million rupees with the financial assistance of Integrated Food Security Programme (IFSP) of the German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ), was handed over to the Agrarian Development Committee of Sampalthivu Friday morning. The Director of International Emergency Aid, Food, Security and World Food Aid of the Federal German Ministry for Economic Co-operation and development, Mr. Horst Mueller, participated as the chief guest.

* Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe Saturday said the current ceasefire agreement with the LTTE should be strengthened to avoid another war. "Negotiated political settlement could be found for the national conflict without war," said Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe addressing the first rally at Padavi-Siripura in Trincomalee district Saturday evening inaugurating an awareness programme island wide, to explain to the public, matters related to constitutional crisis between the Executive and the Legislature.

Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe said the government was not in a position to take forward the peace process as two key ministries, defense and interior had been taken over by the President. However the UNF government would extend its support to the President if she ventured to find resolution to national issues.

He appealed to all political parties to make full use of the truce now in force to usher permanent peace. Mr. Wickremasinghe added a broad dialogue should be initiated between the Sri Lanka government and the LTTE about the interim power sharing institution for the northeast province. The LTTE has submitted its response to the government interim administrative structure proposals. The two major political parties should unite to carry out their responsibility in taking forward the stalled peace process and find a permanent solution to the national conflict, he added.

Mr. Wickremasinghe suggested that two major political parties should reach a consensus on the LTTE's interim self-governing authority (ISGA) proposal to avoid differences when a final political settlement is arrived at. Interim administrative structure should be established in the northeast giving priority to three vital issues, safeguarding the territorial integrity, sharing power for development and to maintain democratic principles in the administration, Mr. Wickremasinghe stressed.

Sunday, November 23, 2003:

* Two Muslim civilians were killed by unknown assailants in two separate incidents in the Kinniya division in Trincomalee district, security sources said. The first incident took place at Faizal Nagar on Sunday night at about 9 p.m. and the other at Kachchaikoditivu on Monday early morning around 2 a.m., sources added. A few people have also been wounded during the incidents and they have admitted to Kinniya and Trincomalee General hospitals. The General Officer Commanding of the Sri Lanka Army in Trincomalee district, Major General Sunil Tennekoon, and the Chinabay Police head, Mr. Clement Fernando, Monday morning rushed to Kinniya to assess the situation and to strengthen the security situation in the Kinniya division, security sources said.

Muslim civilians died in grenade attacks according to preliminary reports reaching the police, security sources said. Additional police and army soldiers have been deployed in Kinniya, Alankerni and other villages in the Kinniya division to prevent further violence in the division, police said. Meanwhile the Kinniya Jemiyathulmal Ulama (Muslim Theologian) Council has appealed to Muslims through loud hailers installed in the mosques in the division to maintain calm, Kinniya residents said.

Monday, November 24, 2003

* Snap polls if the Tittawela-Samarawickrema Committee cannot arrive at a suitable compromise acceptable to both the President

and Prime Minister to solve present political crisis. The French co-habitation model is also being looked into.

* Senior UNF Government Minister M. H. Mohamed says that if UNF Government decides to form a National Government for reconciliation and reconstruction it would result in the UNF losing its identity.

* Tamil parties call for resolving of political impasse between President and Prime Minister because the delay in the peace process runs the risk of being impaired due to the lack of clarity and uncertainty.

* SLFP Central Committee under President endorses alliance with JVP.

* "It is the considered view of the Tamil people and of the fifteen Members of Parliament of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) that the responsibility on the part of the government to sustain the ceasefire, and to continue with the peace process, must flow from one single authority," said the TNA parliamentary group leader, Mr. R. Sampanthan, speaking in the budget debate in parliament Monday. It is our considered view that responsibility on the part of the Government for Defense and the ceasefire is a joint responsibility, which must be vested with a single authority and the two are inseparable. Damage to ceasefire will inexorably damage the peace process. We strongly urge that this lack of clarity and uncertainty be ended at the earliest. The peace process runs the risk of being gravely impaired, if this lack of clarity and uncertainty continues, and we earnestly urge the President and Prime Minister to resolve this impasse without delay." Sampanthan said.

Tuesday, November 25, 2003

* Sinhala nationalist protestors burnt an effigy of European's Union Commissioner for External Affairs, Mr. Chris Patten in the busy business hub of downtown Colombo Tuesday morning. Mr. Patten arrived in Sri Lanka's capital Tuesday for meetings with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe, President Kumaratunga and the leader of the Liberation Tigers, Mr. Velupillai Pirapaharan. The protest was organized from 11 a.m. by the Patriotic National Movement formed by the Sinhala nationalist Janata Vimukthi Peramuna and President Kumaratunga's People's Alliance.

The protestors shouted slogans against Mr. Patten and warned the Sri Lankan government against the "sinister designs of European Imperialism to divide the island".

The EU External Affairs Commissioner's scheduled meeting with Mr. Pirapaharan on Wednesday has drawn howls of protests from Sinhala nationalists and extremists.

* The political instability in the south of the country has been considered by the local and international community as the main obstacle to take the peace process forward, the United National Front government senior minister and media spokesman, Professor G.L. Peiris, said. «The take over of three key ministries - defense, interior and mass communication—from the UNF government by the President has hindered the continuation of the peace process the present government had launched since it came to power,» Minister Peiris told Colombo-based diplomats Monday, briefing them about the current political crisis, sources said.

Minister Peiris assured the diplomats that his government hoped to continue the current peace efforts. What was required now was not setting up of a national government thus ending sharing cabinet portfolios between the two major parties. The two major parties must join and work for the success of the stalled peace talks to resume and to reach its objective of finding permanent peace in the country, media sources quoted Mr. Peiris as telling the diplomats.

* The Varothaya Nagar Barathi Vidiyalayam in the suburb of Trincomalee town, which has a history of being occupied during military operations in the past, till the signing of the ceasefire agreement by the Government and the LTTE has now got a new two storied building at a cost of nearly 4.6 million rupees under the North East Community Restoration and Development Project (NECORD). The building was declared open Monday. The NECORD is funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Wednesday, November 26, 2003

* Chris Patten today said that in his meeting with the LTTE leader, he stressed that the Tigers should renounce violence, stop ceasefire violations, accept a federal solution and address the issue of a Muslim delegation to the peace talks. Patten made it clear to Prabhakaran that "whatever happens in the past, the International community wants the LTTE to turn its back for once and for all on violence and commit itself to the peace process. The International Community cannot accept trying to achieve political ends through violence."

In the meeting with Prabhakaran, Patten said he refereed to the Oslo declaration where the Tigers accepted a Federal solution to the ethnic question and told the Tiger leader that LTTE proposals should be a set of suggestions and not the final negotiation position because it is quite difficult to associate them with any form of federal solution he was aware of, he said.

Patten said he also asked that problems related to the SLMC demand for a separate Muslim representation for the peace talks - which the Tigers had hitherto denied - should be resolved in the interest of the Muslim community.

* A joint council comprising the President, the Prime Minister and senior members of the two main parties as well as from other political parties to deal with the peace process is likely to emerge soon following the Samarawickreme -Tittawella talks. The committee has also been engaged in discussing the possibility of forming a joint council to carry the peace process forward and the adoption of the French model on the handling of the defence portfolio. Meanwhile, there are also reports that the Samarawickreme-Tittawella committee has reportedly run in to a deadlock. The government is asking for an interim period of four months before taking a decision on forming a national government while President Kumaratunga is insisting on an immediate positive response, informed sources said.

* Ten soldiers of the Sri Lanka Army were buried alive in the muddy land between Eluthumadduval and Nagarkovil coastal area in Thenmaradchi division in Jaffna district while undergoing training on Wednesday at about 6 p.m., police said. A group of about thirty army soldiers had gone for training to the muddy land located along the coastal area stretching from Thondamanaru to Vettalaikerni. The soldiers did not know the soil condition of the land where they were engaged in training, and saw three of them going down in the muddy land. Some seven soldiers had gone to the rescue of their fellow soldiers. But they, too, had gone down in the muddy soil. Finally, the rest of the soldiers with great difficulty recovered the bodies of the ten dead soldiers, security sources said. The bodies of soldiers were removed to the Palaly SLA base to be transported to Colombo and from there to the native places of the soldiers, police said.

Thursday, November 27, 2003

* LTTE Leader Velupillai Prabhakaran in his annual message commemorating the Heroes' Day today (1) Rejected accusations made by President Chandrika Kumaratunga that his organisation was strengthening its military power and preparing for war; (2) Denied allegations that the recent proposals submitted by his organisation to establish an Interim Administrative Council (IAC) in the North-east constitute the foundation for the creation of a separate state. He further argued that some of the features of self-governance had been misinterpreted as a project for a separate state; (3) Warned that if the Sinhala chauvinistic ruling elites continued to deny the rights of our people and oppose reconciliation and if the conditions of oppression continued, the Tamils would have no alternative but to secede and form an independent state invoking the right to self-determination of our people; and (5) asserted, "Our organisation, as well as our people do not want war. We want peace and we want to resolve our problems through peaceful means. We are deeply committed to the peace process."

* The Ministry of Interior today citing police reports states there has been evidence of a "third party" responsible for the incidents in

Trincomalee aimed at creating disturbances between the Muslims and Tamils. It says the police have advised the public not to be roused by these events. It further states that with the co-operation of all sections of the people and religious dignitaries the police had been able to ensure peace in the area.

* A special court of inquiry was appointed today to probe the tragedy where ten army commandos were drowned in a quagmire of mud during a training exercise in Jaffna on Wednesday, November 26 evening.

* The second reading of the third budget of the UNF government was passed in parliament today with 126 votes for and 88 against. The TNA, CWC, SLMC also voted with the governing UNF.

Friday, November 28, 2003

* Three Muslim farmers were killed in Nadu Ootru in Kinniya division in Trincomalee district. Fellow farmers found their bodies Saturday morning in paddy fields with injuries said to have been caused by pointed weapons and reported the incident to the security forces. Nadu Ootru village is in the government controlled area, police said. The three dead farmers on the night of Friday had been guarding their rain-fed paddy crops from wild animals, police said. More soldiers and police have been deployed in Kinniya and its suburbs and strengthened the security of the villages, police said. A special police team has been sent to the site to conduct investigation, Trincomalee police said. The dead farmers have been identified as Nagoor Pitchchai Faleel (58), Abdul Muthalif Subair (50) and Hayathu Mohamed Hussain (58).

A dusk to dawn curfew has been imposed in Kinniya police division in the Trincomalee district Saturday evening to defuse escalating tension caused by the killing of the three Muslim farmers. Muslim families living in Kandalady and other Muslim villages are reported to have fled from their residences and sought refuge in Kinniya and other secured areas due to fear following the Friday's killings. Some local Muslim activists claimed Saturday the LTTE was behind this incident but the LTTE sources had categorically denied it. Meanwhile the curfew, which has come into force Saturday 6 p.m., is expected to be lifted Sunday morning 6 a.m.

* A delegation consisting of seven members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), led by Head of the LTTE Peace Secretariat, Mr. Pulithevan, began a study tour to South Africa on Wednesday to look at aspects of federalism, constitutional frameworks and administrative structures employed in that country. The LTTE team is expected to meet South African experts to discuss matters related to South Africa's constitution, according reports. Two women tigers from the LTTE's political wing were part of the delegation, according to the LTTE Peace Secretariat.

Saturday, November 29, 2003

* President says it is about time that the two main parties put back all differences and forged ahead to restore peace and democracy. President proposes the appointment of minister assisting defence on the recommendations of the Premier. This is a counter-proposal sent by the Premier to set up the National Defence Council (NDC) on the lines of the French system of handling defence. President promotes the idea of the establishment of a Joint Peace Council (JPC) chaired by herself and the Premier. The committee will also have representation from civil society groups and nominees of the President.

* The Premier rejects the President's proposals to share defence and enlarge the representations to the peace process. General elections might solve impasse but parliament can only be dissolved after December 18 that is after the third reading of the Budget is passed.

Sunday, November 30, 2003:

* While the Tittawella-Samarawickrema Committee continue its deliberations in trying to fuse a satisfactory working relationship between the President and the Prime Minister, the President has made several requests in her proposals to the Prime Minister and among them is to create a national consensus for one-year to deal with vital

issues such as the peace process, strengthening of democratic institutions, good governance, infrastructure development and a moratorium on political crossovers in parliament.

* The Central Committee of the TULF which met today in Colombo reportedly passed a resolution stating that they had no confidence in the party's President Mr V. Anandasangaree and demanding his resignation from the post as has been reportedly demanded by the LTTE. However, Mr Anandasangaree, who presided at the meeting and his supporters have denied that such a resolution was taken, while the party's General Secretary Mr R. Sambathan claimed that the resolution was adopted.

* A dusk to dawn police curfew has been imposed in the Trincomalee police division with effect from Sunday evening from 6pm. The curfew will be lifted at 5 a.m. on Monday, police announced through loudhailers in town Sunday evening. Residents of Trincomalee town have been requested to co-operate with the security forces to maintain law and order, police said. The Police deployed more army soldiers and police personnel strengthening of the town and its suburbs to contain further violence, which followed incidents in which two factions of Muslims and Tamils had been involved, police said. The curfew has been imposed as a preventive measure, police said.

Monday, December 01, 2003

* The African National Congress (ANC) in a statement issued on Monday said that the ANC is meeting with members of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) delegation currently on a study tour to South Africa. The ANC would also meeting Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Tyrone Fernando on Tuesday, the statement said. Full text of the press statement issued by the ANC follows: The African National Congress is meeting a delegation from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam today (Monday, 1 December) led by the Secretary General of the LTTE Peace Secretariat, Mr S. Puleedevan. This will be followed by a meeting on Tuesday (2 December) with the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, the Hon Mr Tyrone Fernando. The aim of these meetings is to share experiences of the South African multi-party negotiations process in an effort to assist the Sri Lankan peace process. The delegation from the Tamil Tigers will have a courtesy meeting with the ANC Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General and Treasurer General, before meeting with members of the ANC's former multi-party negotiations team. They will also meet with representatives of the South African Human Rights Commission, Independent Electoral Commission and Constitutional Court. They will also meet the ANC provincial leadership in KwaZulu Natal and Western Cape to discuss their experiences of coalition partnerships. The ANC is committed to assist the parties in Sri Lanka to achieve a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict in that country. We hope that our own experience of an inclusive negotiations process may be of use to the different parties in Sri Lanka.

* Four members of Sri Lanka's Human Rights Commission (HRC), lead by Dr. Rathika Kumaraswamy arrived in Batticaloa Monday morning on a two day visit to study the situation prevailing in the eastern province.

Other members of the HRC delegation visiting Batticaloa are Dr. Deepika Udagama, Dr.M.A.Zeinudeen, Mrs.S.S.Senanayake and Lecturer in Law N.Selvakumar. The delegation visited Meeravodai in Valaichenai and talked to the resettled families on their situation, and their immediate needs. Later the HRC members visited Vinayagapuram refugee camp and met with the refugees in the camp. The delegation is expected to meet with members of the different civil groups, representatives of local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to discuss with them matters related to resettlement and issues facing resettled families.

* A curfew has been reimposed in Trincomalee and Kinniya police divisions in the Trincomalee district with effect from 7 p.m. Monday. It will be lifted at 5 a.m. on Tuesday, Trincomalee police said.

Meanwhile, the Trincomalee Police is to submit a comprehensive report within two day's time to the President, Ms Chandrika

Kumaratunge, regarding the security situation of the Trincomalee district, police said. The President has instructed the acting Inspector General of Police to bring normalcy in the Trincomalee district by deploying more security personnel in the problem areas in the district, Presidential secretariat sources said.

In the meantime, the North East Muslim parliamentarians Forum is to meet Tuesday at the parliamentary complex to review the security situation in the Trincomalee district, especially in Kinniya, according to Forum Secretary Mr.M.L.A.M.Hisbullah. Mr.Hisbullah further said a delegation of the Forum would meet the President and Prime Minister Tuesday evening to bring to their notice the hardships of Muslims currently undergoing in the Trincomalee district.

Two conferences were held Monday in Trincomalee town to defuse tension between two communities, Muslims and Tamils and bring back normalcy in Kinniya and Trincomalee police divisions, which had been rocked by violence for the last few days, police said.

The first conference held at the Trincomalee police headquarters where representatives of peace committees, religious organizations and village level officers (Grama Sevaka officers) participated. Presiding over the conference, Senior Superintendent of Police Mr.Upali Hewage said incidents daily taking place in Trincomalee and Kinniya division have caused deep concern over the maintenance of law and order in the district. He appealed to leading citizens and religious leaders of the town to act with responsibility and assist the law enforcement authorities to bring the situation under control.

Religious leaders of all faiths in their speeches said the elements behind violent incidents taking place in the Trincomalee district should be identified to sustain the peace efforts now being taken forward in the country.

Tuesday, December 02, 2003

* The proposals envisaged by the Tittawella-Samarawickrema Committee are the establishment of a Joint Peace Council co-chaired by the President and the Prime Minister, the appointment of a Minister Assisting Defence from the UNF who would handle peace related defence matters, the establishment of an Independent Governing Council for all state media on the BBC model and a moratorium on political crossovers.

* A delegation of the North East Muslim Parliamentarians' Forum (NEMPF) Tuesday afternoon met with President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunge, and discussed in detail the deteriorating security situation in the Trincomalee district, especially the Kinniya division. The delegation urged the President to take immediate steps to bring the situation under control and to help the Muslims there from being killed and wounded, sources said.

Parliamentarians of the NEMPF Tuesday morning met at the parliamentary complex with Deputy Minister Mr. Noordeen Mashoor in the chair and reviewed the security situation in Kinniya and the sufferings of Muslim families due to violence. At that meeting they had decided to make representation to the President.

The NEMPF delegation brought to the notice of the President that eight Muslims had been killed and about 15 had been injured in recent violence in the Kinniya division. The delegation further brought to the notice of the President that around 5000 families had been displaced and sought refuge elsewhere. Of the refugees, about 3500 are from the Muslim community and the rest are Tamils. The President was informed that six people had been killed in what appeared to be inter-communal clashes in the past few days. The delegation appealed to the President to strengthen the security in Trincomalee town and Kinniya division by deploying more security personnel.

The President promptly instructed the Defense Ministry Secretary, Mr. Cyril Herath, Interior Ministry Secretary Mr.M.N.A.Junaid and the acting Inspector General of Police Mr.Indra de Silva to take immediate steps to provide security to all communities in the Trincomalee district. "The president ordered the police to arrest any person, including Tamil Tiger cadres, who are responsible for an

breach of the peace," said an official in Kumaratunga's office.

Wednesday, December 03, 2003:

* Following the recent attacks on Muslims in the east more so in Trincomalee District in Kinniya, a "third force" was suspected of organizing these attacks. Reports say that the LTTE and Security Forces are working together to resume normalcy. President has also observed that the violence started in Kinniya following her take over of the Defence and Interior Ministries. While some Muslim community leaders have denied the presence of a "third force" and blamed the Tamil Tigers for instigating the violent acts, they have called for an investigation as to identify who this "third force" is.

*Mrs. Mangayarkarasi Amirthalingam, wife of the former TULF leader, who was slain by the LTTE in Colombo in 1989, commenting on the no-confidence vote on the current TULF leader Anandasangaree says that the TULF is trying to surrender itself to the LTTE - the party that assassinated her husband and many other TULF leaders. She added that the TULF represented Tamil aspirations in the country as well as abroad.

Thursday, December 04, 2003

* President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunge, and Prime Minister, Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe, held their third round of talks on the cohabitation crisis, but did not reach any consensus. They agreed to meet again on December 10 and terminate their talks on or before December 15, ruling United National Front sources said. The discussion focused attention on finding a consensus to sort out the current crisis about sharing power between them, sources said. The President and PM reviewed the progress made so far by the Samarawickrama-Tittawela committee, expressing some hope of a settlement as long as the talks continued. Among the matters discussed were the set of proposals forwarded by President Kumaratunga on the peace process, good governance, strengthening democratic institutions and improving infrastructure. But there were some ar-

reas that needed to be discussed in depth before arriving at a final decision, the sources said.

However, unlike in the two previous occasions the committee did not issue a joint statement but said at the discussions which lasted only for an hour at President's House the parties took a firm stand to meet the December 15 deadline set by the President. Political analysts in Colombo say that a dissolution of parliament followed by a general election will become inevitable if the President and the PM do not arrive at some form of power-sharing arrangement.

* Hundreds of Buddhist monks from the National Bhikku Front held a demonstration and protest march against the Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) proposals of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) Thursday afternoon in Colombo.

The demonstration and protest march started in front of the Buddha statue at the Viharemhadevi Park in Town Hall and the march reached the Bo tree at Colombo Fort. The demonstrators carried banners, Sri Lanka's national flag and Buddhist flag, and protested the ISGA proposals, saying the LTTE should be defeated and its proposals should not be considered at all. Civilians also marched in the procession along with the monks. Some of leading monks of Buddhist society, including Ven. Madiyathila Vijitha thera and Ven. Bengamuvay Nalake thera participated in the demonstration. When the procession reached the Bo tree, the monks and other protesters sat down under the Bo tree and started singing Buddhist hymns against what they said was 'handing over' ISGA to the LTTE. The NBF's leader, Ven. Kalavalgale Chandaloka thera, speaking to the press said, «We plan to hand over a petition signed by 3000 monks to the President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, against the handing over of Interim Administration Authority to the LTTE.»

* Sri Lanka would get more funds for clearing mines in the northeast if it acceded to the Ottawa Convention banning the use of landmines said Mr. Ted Chaiban, the head of the UNICEF in Sri Lanka, in a brief presentation on behalf of the UN at the launch of 'Mine Action Media Campaign' at the Prime Minister's office in Colombo on Thursday. Sri Lanka is one of the 44 countries that have not signed the Ottawa Convention.

The Mine Action Media Campaign, initiated by the 'National Steering Committee for Mine Action' (NSCMA) under the Sri Lankan Prime Minister's office, was produced by Young Asia Television (YA TV) with assistance from the UNICEF and the UNDP. Though the Government is agreeable in principle to sign anti-mine Convention, it will be difficult for it to do so until it is certain that the armed conflict is over and the Tigers also give a binding commitment not to use landmines, a government source said.

* The Asian Development Bank funded North East Community Organization for Restoration and Development (NECORD) Project today launched the Village Rehabilitation Programme (VRP) under the Community Development Project (CDP) in eight districts of the North-East, with the signing of two agreements with non-governmental organizations to implement two projects in the Trincomalee district. Fourteen villages have been selected in the province in the first phase under the CDP, NECORD Deputy Project Director Mr. N. Puhendran said.

Friday, December 05, 2003

* LTTE Political Wing Leader S. P. Thamilchelvan at a press conference in Kilinochchi says that they are ready for peace but are watching the political instability in the south. They need to know with whom to continue the peace process.

* The Government yesterday declared that the two major political parties will have to decide on alternative means to resolve the current political crisis, if the on going talks for a national consensus on critical policies fail to reach a conclusion by December 15.

Cabinet spokesman Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris told the Cabinet press briefing: «In an unfortunate contingency, one will have to take stock of the situation and resort to practical measures to resolve the situation.» However, he refused to disclose what this alternative means the Government had in mind, in reply to inquires by the media.

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The Minister said if the two parties cannot come up with a "desired solution" before the set deadline, it would be necessary to seek alternative ways for a "practical solution" so as to gain much needed political clarity to revive the peace process. «A long pause between the peace talks can put the peace process in a fragile situation,» he emphasised adding that the Eastern situation can be effectively addressed in a more stable political set up.

Referring to the recent set of conciliatory proposals by the President which included the appointment of a minister assisting Ministry of Defence, Prof. Peiris said the suggestion was unacceptable since the set up would not give full authority to the PM on matters concerning the defence. Explaining the Government stance, the minister said, «There was no desire to embarrass the President or to create undue conflicts.» Nevertheless, he added that the government cannot be entirely satisfied unless the PM is in total control over all aspects concerning the peace process. He reiterated that the immediate need of the hour was for a national consensus not a national government.

* The Sri Lanka Army and police Friday strengthened the security of the Muttur town following the death of a Muslim person, Mr. Raheem alias Bala, in a bomb blast that had taken place in Muttur town close to a mosque Thursday night around 7.30 p.m., police said. The Trincomalee police headquarters said that security forces had recovered another live grenade at the site where the incident had taken place.

Meanwhile, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) Friday denied any involvement in the Muttur bomb blast. In the meantime, security forces Friday said Kinniya division has been limping back to normalcy as religious and community leaders have been working closely to monitor development in the area after a series of killing of eight Muslims by unknown persons. Meanwhile, police said they had complained to the SLMM that the LTTE was constructing a bunker in the Muttur coast.

Saturday, December 06, 2003

* Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe speaking at a rally in Kurunegala ruled out the formation of a National Government stating that it would lead to a conflict with President Kumaratunge who is a member of the opposition.

* Sri Lanka Muslim Congress Leader and Ports Development and Shipping, Eastern Development & Muslim Religious Affairs Minister, Rauff Hakeem called on Shipping Minister, Central Government of India, Satrugan Sinha at his ministry in New Delhi Thursday.

They discussed wide ranging issues relating to shipping and ports with special emphasis on the immediate need to commence passenger ferry service between the two countries, Ministry of Ports Development and Shipping release said. Since the ferry service between Colombo and Chennai is in question it was pointed out that efforts should be made to operate a ferry service to an alternative destination in India preferably Cochin. Hakeem has proposed that training and development cooperation in the sector between the countries and the possibilities of investing in ports and shipping field. Both Ministers exchanged views on Sedu Samuthra and Sagara Mala projects mooted by India. Hakeem invited his counterpart to visit Sri Lanka and requested him to sign the MoU relating to the ferry services between the countries.

* LTTE theoretician Anton Balasingham tells a Martyr's Day meeting in London that the LTTE was totally against the western style of solving the ethnic issue. He was referring to the massive aid package linked to the LTTE making a permanent commitment towards peace. «We cannot accept the imposition of limits of the Tamil people's political aspirations by them. Our people alone must decide on their political status and destiny, not international actors. LTTE abhors Western democratic systems depending on multi-party polity and publicly preaches a one party state where other parties should take guidance from the LTTE,» he said.

Sunday, December 07, 2003

* India says story is false that they are going to chair a top-level

committee representing America, the European Union, Japan and Norway in a move to work out a better relationship between the President and Premier, which would last for two years – December 2005. Instead, India said that they are working independently on the peace process and do not want to interfere in the cohabitation problem.

* Speaking at a meeting held in Puttalam Saturday, Sri Lanka's Prime Minister, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, said that if the current cohabitation crisis is solved through talks, it would usher in a new political culture, but if the crisis is not resolved, the public would face several difficulties, sources said. The PM also said that the Muslims in the North East have certain problems and the government would take steps to ensure their security, especially in the East.

The Puttalam meeting was part of Mr. Wickremesinghe's efforts to explain his policies to the public at several places in the South. «The current crisis has set back the peace process and the country's economy. So the crisis should be resolved through talks. Such a solution would be a good sign of progress,» said Mr. Wickremesinghe. «We don't want to go fighting and conducting a struggle the traditional way to solve this crisis because that would only cause more difficulties to the people.»

«Though the set-back to the peace process was triggered by the take-over of three ministries by the President, I have since conducted talks with her three times. But the progress in the talks has not been as good as expected,» said the PM, adding that a committee consisting of representatives of his government and the President is continuing to look at the issue.

* The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), a constituent of the ruling United National Front government Saturday announced that it would submit its response to the government's proposal for an interim administrative structure for the Northeast by the end of December.

The SLMC leader and Ports Minister in the UNF government, Mr. Rauff Hakeem, on his return from India after a week's study tour on devolution of power there, told reporters that the SLMC proposals would be handed over to the government, LTTE and the international community before the end of this month. He said his visit to India had helped him to formulate an interim administrative structure proposal to meet the aspiration of Muslim people in the northeast. Mr. Hakeem led an eleven-member delegation to India at the invitation of the Indian government on a study tour regarding the devolution of power to the states in India.

* President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga appealed to all communities to co-operate in establishing a national government for the well-being of the country. President made this appeal at Ramazan celebration at the "President's House" on Thursday.

Monday, December 08, 2003:

* The once most popular and longest functioning Tamil political party, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) is struck by an internal crisis splitting it from top to bottom. The meeting of its Central Committee of the TULF, which is now a constituent member of the Tamil Nationalist Alliance (TNA), on 7 December ended in uproar and conflicting reports about a resolution reportedly adopted expressing no confidence in the party's President Mr V Anandasangaree. While the party's General Secretary Mr R Sampanthan claimed that such a resolution was adopted by 25 votes in favour to 10 against, its President Anandasangaree who presided at the meeting said that no such resolution was adopted.

* Following the intervention by the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, the LTTE removed a bunker they were constructing near the Muttur Police Station yesterday evening. Army Spokesman Colonel Sumedha Perera said the LTTE had agreed to remove the bunker after discussions with the SLMM following a complaint by the security forces. It was reported that the LTTE was involved in constructing a bunker near the Muttur Police station last week.

* Through the World Bank had insisted on the imposition of VAT on the retail trade the Government of Ranil Wickramasinghe refused to bow down to such pressure and presented a Budget that

caters to the needs of the people, said Prof. G.L. Peiris, Minister of Enterprise Development, Industrial Policy, Investment Promotion and Constitutional Affairs at a public meeting held after the inauguration of the new Industrial Park at Fullerton Estate, Nagoda, Kalutara.

* After privatising 40 percent of CWE shares in SATHOSA Retail Ltd. and 100 percent of its management, the permanent staff of nearly 6,000 who refuse to continue employment under the management of 'International Grocers Alliance' or to join other institutions of SATHOSA Holdings Ltd. will have to go home without compensation by next year.

* Three leading Muslim MPs from the East have expressed consternation to President Chandrika Kumaratunga over the alleged statement made by the Interior Ministry about the 'existence of a "third force" instrumental in the recent spate of killings in the East. Deputy Minister for Housing Bashir Segu Dawood, Trincomalee District Parliamentarians K.Thawfeek (SLMC) and M. Maharooof (UNP) brought to the President's attention the situation prevailing in Kinniya and Muttur in the Trincomalee district. They have called for immediate action to maintain law and order. The three parliamentarians have urged the President to take steps to redress the grievances of the Muslims. They maintained that the invention of the story of a third party involvement in the Kinniya incident in Trincomalee was a clear attempt to divert the attention of the people in a situation where the President and the law enforcing authorities had failed in their duties.

Tuesday, December 09, 2003

* President's spokesman Harim Pieris says that President will not give back Defence portfolio at any cost. The Supreme Court has deliberated that her actions are Constitutional. The President believes that the peace process cannot be handled by a single political party. It has to have the consensus of all political parties.

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* LTTE Political Wing Leader S. P. Thamilchelvan meets a delegation of TNA Parliamentarians in Kilinochchi and requests them to campaign for a favourable Indian stance. Promises respect of rights of Muslims and position on Interim Administrative Council. Fourteen TNA parliamentarians except Batticaloa M.P., Mr.K.Thangavadivel, and Jaffna M.P., Mr.V.Ananadasangaree attended the meeting.

* The SLFP-JVP talks presided over by President Chandrika Kumaratunga ended yesterday with the JVP agreeing to two crucial amendments put forward by the SLFP. Both Parties stressed this agreement in no way signalled a merger of the two parties. The task of deciding upon a date for the signing of an MoU was left to the two General Secretaries, Maithripala Sirisena and Tilvin Silva.

* The Sihala Urumaya yesterday threatened to stage a massive protest near what it calls an LTTE bunker at Maha-oya in Ampara urging President Chandrika Kumaratunga to take immediate action to dismantle it before December 20. The alleged bunker had been built 500 metres away from the police barrier at Tampitiya in Maha-oya, the party Propaganda Secretary Udaya Gammanpila said. 'It would be meaningless for the President to head the Defence Ministry if she continues to follow the weak policies of the UNF government,' he said.

Meanwhile, a top army official told the Daily Mirror that they were unaware of such an LTTE bunker or camp at Maha-oya.

* Sri Lanka's army chief Lieutenant General Lionel Balagalle on yesterday visited the disputed border between India and Pakistan in Kashmir, defence sources in New Delhi said. Balagalle would be the first foreign visitor to the Line of Control (LoC) - the de facto border dividing Kashmir into Indian and Pakistani administered regions - since the two South Asian rivals began a ceasefire on November 26.

Balagalle, who arrived in New Delhi late would hold talks with India's Defence Minister and the Chiefs of the Army, Navy and Airforce. India and Sri Lanka pledged to forge closer defence ties during a visit by Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe to New Delhi in October.

* A youth allegedly abducted by the LTTE surrendered to the Siththandi Army Camp on 7 December fleeing from his abductors, Military spokesman Colonel Sumeda Perera said. The youth said he was abducted by two LTTE cadres at Kalawanchikudy and was detained at the LTTE office at the old post office, Kalawanchikudy. He escaped from his captors and surrendered to the Siththandi Army Camp. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) has been informed about the incident.

Wednesday, December 10, 2003

* Former Indian Foreign Secretary M. K. Rasgotra, Jawaharlal University Professor S. G. Muni and former Chief of India's Eastern Naval Command Vice Admiral P. S. Das say that the LTTE will not be allowed to take full control of the north and the east. Vice Admiral Das also adds that India will not recognise the LTTE as a third Navy besides they have only 500 odd boats and they are terrorists. This statement follows Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha Jayaram calling for joint operations between the Indian and Sri Lankan Navy to prevent the Indian Ocean becoming a breeding ground for terrorist organisations.

* A bus conductor was seriously injured when a soldier opened fire at an LTTE cadre who refused to be body searched near the Jaffna bus stand, an Army official said. He said the soldiers had seen an LTTE cadre selling a pro-Tiger newspaper and there was suspicion he might be carrying a grenade. When he was questioned, an argument arose and the LTTE cadres refused to allow the soldiers to body-check him. The official said that in the melee, a soldier opened fire, but the shot hit a bus conductor near by while the suspect ran towards an LTTE camp in the vicinity. The SLMM has been informed of the incident while the bus conductor has been warded at Jaffna hospital.

* The Supreme Court has clearly mentioned that the takeover of the Defence portfolio by the President is a constitutional requirement. Therefore the President will not give back this portfolio,

Presidential Media Spokesman Harim Peiris told a media briefing yesterday.

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga firmly believes that the peace initiative cannot be implemented by a single political party and is engaged in a sincere effort to create a consensus among all the political parties, he said. Peiris said the President believes that the peace initiative should be implemented in collaboration with all political parties.

«A Constitutional amendment is needed to properly implement the peace talks and it is compulsory to obtain a two thirds majority. The President believes that the peace effort cannot be a reality without unity among all political parties.» Peiris said that a consensus among all political parties is the best way to seek public support towards the peace initiative.

* Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Deputy Minister, Mohideen Abdul Cader rejoined the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress accepting Minister Rauff Hakeem's leadership on December 9 morning at his official residence in the presence of SLMC parliamentarians and party supporters from the Kalkuda electorate, Batticaloa district, states an SLMC press release.

Mohideen Abdul Cader said though he left the party and work with the Ashroff Congress which was formed and led by Minister Athallah he had great respect for SLMC leader Minister Hakeem.

Thursday, December 11, 2003

* President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe yesterday held extensive discussions on the peace process at the President House. A top Presidential aide said the three hour meeting focused mainly on matters concerning the peace process and the Government's position on the LTTE proposals.

«The PM explained what will be the Government's limits on devolution and what powers he wishes to give to the Interim Administration,» he said. He described the meeting as cordial.

The meeting was in response to a request made by the President at the previous meeting to outline the Prime Minister's stance on the LTTE's proposals for an Interim Self Governing Authority to the North-East. The progress of the Samarawickrema-Tittawella committee was also discussed. The Samarawickrema-Tittawella Committee - which has met almost daily since the second week of November - will continue deliberations separately with another meeting scheduled today.

Sources close to the committee said the December 15 deadline was flexible in the light of continuing deliberations. It is understood that a proposal has been made to establish a Ministry of National Security, which will deal with the ceasefire, SLMM and matters connected to the peace process. According to this proposal, the President, as Defence Minister, will be in charge of the Armed Forces and overall defence. It has been pointed out that similar arrangements existed during the tenures of Presidents J.R. Jayewardene, R. Premadasa and D.B. Wijetunga.

* The Cabinet last night approved a Cabinet paper seeking to rectify salary anomalies in the health sector, Government sources told the Daily News last night. «The Cabinet has approved the demands and proposals seeking to rectify the salary anomalies in the health sector, sources said. Earlier, the Health Sector Trade Union Alliance (HSTUA) decided to further suspend all its trade union action following a written assurance from Health Minister P. Dayaratne that their demands will be taken up at yesterday's Cabinet meeting.

* The Cabinet also decided that in future no government advertisements would be given to the government media both print and electronic and also that no Minister or MP of the ruling party would give any interviews to the government media or participate in any panel discussions organized by the Rupavahini and the ITN. The

President was not present at the Cabinet meeting.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga told the press last night that she would not dissolve Parliament and go in for Parliamentary elections. «I have no intention what so ever of dissolving Parliament ahead of time unless it is really necessary,» President Kumaratunga told Daily Mirror in a hurried interview at President's House last night after addressing a ceremony of small scale businessmen and academics. She also told this newspaper that her talks with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe yesterday which lasted three hours, were inconclusive and had to be continued.

* The expanded programme of immunization survey is to be launched in the Jaffna district, after two decades, with the UNICEF funding Thursday. All children under school-going age would be brought under the survey to ensure whether they have been immunized properly during the war period and after, health ministry sources said.

The Health Ministry's epidemiological unit has sent a team of fifteen medical officials and about fifty nursing students from Colombo and provincial health ministry in Trincomalee to conduct this house to house survey with the ground staff selected in the district under cluster basis. All children under 1, 2, 3, 5 and school-going ages would be brought under scrutiny to ensure whether they have been immunized for diphtheria, whooping cough, polio, measles and rubella in the past.

The five-day survey would conclude on December 15. Earlier such survey was conducted in Trincomalee district and other districts of the northeast province. This is the first time such a survey has been undertaken in the Jaffna district after two decades and the after the ceasefire agreement, health sources said.

* The National Youth Services Council (NYSC) together with the Sri Lanka Youth Club Federation has implemented a flagship program to educate youth attached to Youth Clubs on the Government's peace initiative.

This programme is implemented with the full sponsorship of the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process. Three days peace camps will be conducted at district level to educate youth on the peace initiative and seek their contribution to make the peace process a success, a NYSC spokesman said yesterday. He said 100 youth will be selected to each peace camp held at district level representing Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim youth club members. Youth club members at Divisional Secretariat level will be educated on the Government's peace initiative with the assistance of the 100 youth who had participated in the district level peace camp. The three-day peace camp will conduct eight lectures to educate youth on the history of country's ethnic conflict and the process of devolution of power, advantages gained from the peace initiative, socio-economic problems created by the ethnic conflict, LTTE proposals and the role of the Sri Lankan youth towards the peace process, he said.

* The Tamil Language Day celebrations and distribution of awards to winners of the All Island Tamil Language Day Competitions organised by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Education and Cultural Affairs will be held on Sunday, December 14th at New Kathiresan Hall, Bambalapitiya commencing at 9 a.m. Minister of Human Resources Development, Education and Cultural Affairs Dr. Karunasena Kodituwakku will be the chief guest. Minister of School Education Suranimala Rajapaksa will be the guest of honour.

Secretary of the Ministry V. K. Nanayakkara, Additional Secretary Thillai Nadarajah, Director of Education (Tamil Unit) N. Nadarajah and Assistant Director C. Sivaniathananda have made arrangements for this event.

More than 1500 students will participate and will be presented with certificates as a mark of encouragement. A Magazine titled «Koormathy» will be released on this occasion. This magazine contains articles written by students, teachers educationists and several others.

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2 Eekathasi

3 Karthigai

4 Pirathosam

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8 Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Jesus Christ

10 Sankadakara Sathurthi

15 Thai Pongal

16 Maatop Pongal

17 Feast of St Antony

18 Krishna Eekathasi

19 Pirathosam

21 Amavasai

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26 Shashti

30 Karthigai; Thiruvillaku Pooja

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Sybil Sakuntala Kanagasundaram

– A Tribute

Sybil passed away on August 9th 2003. She was eighty-two when she departed from us. For those who have had the joy and privilege of knowing her, Sybil's departure from our midst is an irreparable loss. If ever there was a person in whom the Gods placed the right mix of qualities to create the perfect woman, it was in her.

The eldest daughter of the late Dr.S.L.Navaratnam, Sybil was born to a life of comfort and privilege in the colonial era, when the emphasis was on western culture. Her father, deeply rooted in traditional Tamil culture, saw to it that she trained both in Western music, learning to play the piano, and also in the Eastern tradition, studying the Veena and training her voice in Carnatic music. Her cultural training enabled her to make a valuable contribution to the Sri Lanka Tamil Women's Union, an organization founded in 1909 for the cultural advancement of Tamil women. Sybil was the President and at the time of her death, its Patron.

As the wife of a senior civil servant of the prestigious Ceylon Civil Service, she played a significant role in the social and welfare organizations of the districts in which her husband served. He was the first Ceylonese civil servant to hold the post of Chairman of the Gal Oya Development Board. It was during his tenure of office that race riots broke out following the passing of the Sinhala Only Bill. Mr. Kanagasundaram was one of the early victims of this discriminatory legislation which was to later tear this country apart. Sybil did not become bitter and discontented that her husband was overlooked in the service due to his ethnic roots. Instead her experiences made her empathize with the aspirations of the Tamil people, endeavour to build a secure home base, and promote the welfare and the security of those affected by the riots. She subsequently committed her time and efforts to provide, to the best of her abilities, a sanctuary for the displaced.

Sybil lost her husband and companion when her two children were young and needed that vital parental care. She was only forty when Kanags had a sudden heart-attack and died instantly in a foreign land. The young widow returned to Sri Lanka with her children and tried to rebuild a life without him. Valiantly she nurtured her children to become a successful scientist and an able banker of repute. Her brothers, only sister,

brother-in-law and her mother supported and counselled her until she was able to gather herself together and contribute meaningfully to the society she lived in. She always looked beyond narrow sectarian lines and lived her faith and religion in everything she did. She never uttered a harsh or unkind word, and her capacity to forgive and forget was immense. She drew deeply from her inner self to comfort and console others who had, like her, lost loved ones and could not find consolation.

Last year at the age of eighty-one she visited Jaffna to see the destruction there for herself. She saw with anguish not only her own home for many decades completely ruined, but also those of many others. The devastation and desolation of a once thriving province made her determined to contribute towards the re-building of Jaffna.

On a visit to Bali in August 2002, she collected samples of beautiful palmyrah palm handicrafts, which she wished to introduce to the Jaffna craftsmen and women to help rebuild that once thriv-

ing rural economy and help war widows to earn an income. She even brought back samples of tiles which she thought could be used to rebuild Jaffna in a distinctive manner. So strong was her Christian faith in rising up from the ruins of one's life and restoring the soul, that she would not merely lament but try to seek that elusive silver lining and soldier on.

She kept an open house and was ever ready to lend a helping hand to those in need. The first trainees from Jaffna on the 'Jaipur Foot Scheme' stayed in her home, and she catered to their needs. Her hospitality was legendary. It was the generosity of a truly remarkable person. Never anticipating rewards for her goodwill she gave of her very best to the world, and when the end came she was indeed blessed. She accepted her illness with tranquillity in her heart. She had all those who deeply loved and cared for her: her beloved sister Saro, her friends both affluent and poor, her daughter Prithiva, and son Ajit all came and nursed her through her last days. One recalls the adage "Give, and thou shall receive." She gave of her all and received in plenty.

Saro Kadirgamar

MR. NAGALINGAM VAMADEVAN

- An Appreciation

Mr. Nagalingam Vamadevan, popularly and affectionately called "Vama", who passed away in London peacefully on 11 October 2003, had a picturesque background which shaped his personality and instilled in him an insatiable thirst to engage in public service to his fellow countrymen who had been forced to take up residence in London.

Born in 1930 at Karampon West, Kayts in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon), he was 73 years of age when Parkinson's disease, a disease which seems to be having a fondness for celebrities as its victims, claimed his life.

His father was an ex-serviceman who had been in the British Army in World War I and served in Mesopotamia as a helmsman on supply boats plying the Tigris River. He was fond of regaling his son Vamadevan, then a young lad attending school at Kayts St. Anthony's College, with stories about Lawrence of Arabia's war-time escapades and floating bodies of beautiful young Armenian women killed in Lord Allenby's attack on the Turkish province of Armenia and being carried by the Tigris to the Persian Gulf.

Vama attended Ananda College, Colombo, for his secondary education and finished it with a stint at Zahira College, Colombo. He joined Ceylon Government Service as a technical assistant in the P.W.D. and worked for some years in different parts of the island, but his ambition was always to become a qualified civil and structural engineer. He had developed a predilection for England although avenues to obtain it in Ceylon were not wanting. Possibly his boyhood imaginations and impressions kindled by his father's World War stories had planted a deep-rooted interest in England. His thirst for learning was so overpowering that by dint of hard work and perseverance in the midst of a job and self-sought social activities in England he was able to obtain an M.Sc. degree from university.

He arrived in England by ship in 1966 accompanied by his amiable young wife Vimala and took up residence in London. Mr. Vamadevan was thus one of the earliest and longest standing resident coterie of London Tamil citizens of Sri Lankan origin who came to be recognized as the elders of

the expatriate community. His inherent kind-heartedness and readiness to respond to the cultural needs of the ever-growing Hindu Tamil community of London quickly made him join the small band of public spirited workers, led by the late Mr. S. Sabapathipillai, which also included the indefatigable Mr. A. Vairavamoorthy, the late Mr. C. Vinayagamorthy, the late Mr. A. T. S. Ratnasingham and a couple of others, who were labouring incessantly for the establishment of a Saiva temple in London. The Highgate Sri Murugan Temple stands today as a monument to the untiring efforts of this group of elders of the London Tamil community, and Vama's contribution therein will be remembered for all time.

Vama was one of the seven Trustees from the very inception of the Britannia Hindu (Shiva) Temple Trust which owns and manages the Sri Murukan Temple and continued to be a

Trustee to the end of his life. He was a trusted and devoted associate and companion of Vairavamoorthy in running the affairs of the Society which manages the Trust and the Temple. It was their combined wisdom, tact and readiness to compromise which saved many an awkward situation that sometimes threatened to disrupt the smooth working of the Society, such as regionalism based on prejudices back home.

London will not forget that it was the combined skill and the efficient manner in which Vamadevan and his fellow Trustees administered and managed the affairs of the Temple and the Trust which made Buckingham Palace to recognize the Highgate Sri Murukan Temple as the most suitable and elegant one, out of all the temples in England, for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to visit as part of the celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of Ascending the Throne, and Mrs. Vimala Vamadevan

receiving Her Majesty at the entrance by waving the traditional auspicious 'Aalaathi' light.

Vama's demise has certainly created a hiatus, which will be found to be difficult to fill. His greatness lies in his ability to strike a balance between his duty to the London Tamil community and his responsibility to his wife and three children. He gave his son Hari and two daughters, Suki and Vamini, a good education which made them professionals in their time. He had them well married and settled in life so as to be blessed with grandchildren. Many observers have noted with admiration how his wife and children repaid with their unbound love and unreserved devotion and care during his last illness. Let the grieving widow and children take solace in the knowledge that dear Vama's services are cherished and appreciated.

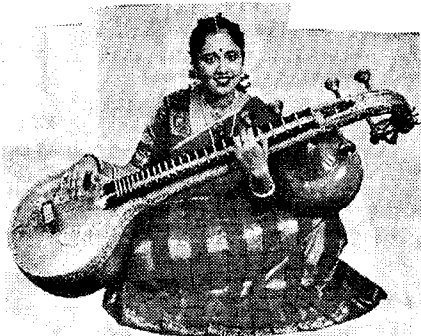
Navaratnam. C. Mohan

Kumari Sughashini's Veena Arangetram

The Veena Arangetram (debut public performance) of Kumari Sughashini Murugesu took place on the 27th of July 2003. The venue was the splendid purpose built Music Auditorium of St Pauls School, London known as 'The Wath-

en Hall'. Sughashini's musical rendition was further enhanced by the acoustically near perfect auditorium, making the evening an unforgettable experience. The entrance to the hall was decorated mainly with Hindu deities and floral arrangements which created a divine atmosphere. This theme was maintained within the auditorium too. Sughashini is a student of Srimathi Renuka Shrianda who is one of the foremost artists in both vocal and veena in London.

The concert began in the most appropriate raga for the time of day (evening) - Vasantha. The next item 'Pranamayaham' with its brief introduction of 'Alapanai' and well punctuated Kalpana Svaras gave the audience the feeling of a true Kachcheri. Sughashini then performed the Naatai raga 'Pancharathna Krithi' with accuracy and perfect flow. The detailed alapanai in 'Amruthavarshini' and attractive kalpana svara korvai that followed the krithi - 'Sudhamaayee' depicted the traditional



style of veena performance i.e. full of unique intricacies. With the charming 'Chitta Svaras' in the song Saraswathy in Saraswathy raga the first half of the concert concluded.

The main item which is the Ragam Thanam Pallavi

inspired the audience all the way through. The Pallavi in one of the rarely heard ragas, 'Chakravakam' set to 'Mishra chapu' thalam was composed by Sughashini's guru with all its pure characters. The alapanai was well performed with typical raga bhava while the thanam took the entire audience to a near divine experience. The 'Thaniavarthanam' that followed the Pallavi captivated the hearts of music lovers. The 'Ragamalikai' song 'Inbakana onru' and the notes of Dr Chittibabu were presented with fluency in both the slow and fast tempos.

The Chief Guest Mr Jay Prakash Lakhani, head of Vivekananda Centre, London, spoke on the role of music in religion. He said any discipline would lead one to God. Of all musical disciplines, veena is the most crucial and divine. Goddess Saraswathy, personification of aesthetic and the greatest teacher of all is represented with veena. Veena is a physical tool to develop a

one pointed concentration which will lead us to God. It was an inspiring speech which vouched the spiritual atmosphere of the evening and the disciplined training Sughashini has had under her esteemed guru Srimathi Renuka Shrianda.

Sughashini was ably supported by experienced and professional artists. On the Mridangam was Shri M Balachandar, whose innovative and precise playing encouraged Sughashini to perform her best. The Ghatam was melodiously played by Bangalore Shri R N Prakash, the best known Ghatam artist in London. Kumari Brinta Rabindra kept the entire music in harmony with perfect sruthi on the Thambura. Srimathi Rathika Rajaloganathan, an experienced TV presenter compered the event in a professional manner.

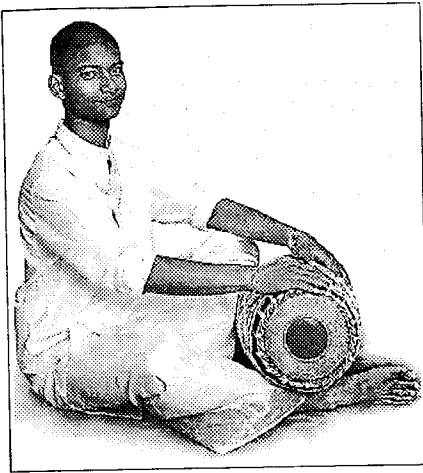
An attractive 'Thillana' followed by a rhythmic 'Thiruppugal' beautifully concluded with a brisk 'Mangalam'. Precise timing, superb selection of ragas and songs, quality music and an appreciative audience came together on this day and were left yearning for more at the end of the concert. The entire performance was of a unique and high standard.

Sughashini also performed her Samarpanam at the Ealing Amman Temple on the 11th of November 2003 to an audience made up of Amman Kovil devotees and well wishers.

We wish Goddess Saraswathy's blessings will be with Sughashini throughout her musical and academic careers.

- Rasikan

Amuthan Ascends the Stage



It has now become a practice in England that the end of summer is marked by a series of "Arangetrams". This year, once again, is no exception. Usually every Fine Art teacher manages to have one such event. Occasionally, some managed to have two or three but in different weeks if not months. Sri Prakash had two this year on successive days of the same weekend. This warrants a lot of courage. To have an

Arangetram is, in itself, a great achievement. To have two and both of some standard is beyond belief and deserves some praise.

The first of these two was Amuthan Chandrakumar's. It was on the Saturday, 11th October 2003. The auditorium of the Catford Theatre was at its full capacity. The event started almost promptly. With one of the eminent singers from Tamil Nadu, Smt Sowmya, on the stage, singing, Amuthan started to accompany her on his Miruthangam. Sri Balu Raguraman, Sri R R Prathap and Sri Sithamparanathan were the other artists supporting Amuthan on the stage. Surprisingly there was no sign of his Guru on the stage. Only when the 'Varnam' finished did the Guru appear on the stage. This in itself, I thought, is a credit to Amuthan. It showed, firstly that, Sri Prakash had a lot of faith in his disciple and secondly, the care he took in checking everything to ensure the event was perfect.

Although Amuthan appeared to be nervous, there was no shortage of enchanting rhythmic melodies in his playing. Apparently Amuthan started his training from his father at an early age. Then he went to Sri Prakash for five years to learn the fine art of playing this instrument. Amuthan has the ability to

play different 'Nadais' within the same 'Tala' as was evident during the concert. He has managed to grasp the technique of playing this instrument and has the potentials to go further. If Amuthan interacts with the accompanying artists a bit more with his body language, it would enhance his image further.

The concert was of good standard. I especially liked the Deekshidar Krithi, "Mee-nakshi Memutham" in the Raga Poorvikalyani. This supposedly is the final composition of Deekshidar before attaining 'Mukthi'. I love the way the composer brings the raga bhava in his Krithis and Smt Sowmya rendered it well. The alapanas of the ragas were also good. I wonder why Sowmya did not sing any of her Guru's (Dr Ramanathan) lovely compositions. Sri Raguraman was following the vocalist on the violin like a shadow. Sri Prathap and Sri Sithamparanathan joined on Gatam and Morsing respectively and contributed much to the delight of everyone.

If there is any criticism, it is the lengthy speeches and compeering that springs to the mind. The compere could have spent a little time familiarising with the titles of compositions and names of the ragas. Frequent announcements were like the speed breakers on rural roads and could have been avoided. Full credit goes to Amuthan and to his Guru.

- Hindolam

Rhythm on the Finger Tips



Kumaran Vigneswara was the second disciple of Sri Prakash in a weekend who ascended the stage on the 12th October, 2003. Here the vocalist was Sri SP Ramh. The other accompaniments were the same as on the previous day.

Kumaran was full of confidence on the stage and played very well. He was very ably aided by the two accompanists Sri Prathap on the Gatam and Sri Sithamparanathan on the Morsing. Kumaran was under the guidance of Sri Prakash for six years, which were well spent. The opportunity to listen to good Karnatic music is rare for the budding artist in this country. Moreover, they have the added need of concentrating on

their academic studies too. Given these two factors, I think that the Kumarans and the Amuhans deserve praise.

Sri Ramh sang really well and seemed to have full confidence in Kumaran's ability to accompany him. Sri Ramh brought his Guru's (Sri Lalgudi G Jayaraman) stamp when he sang "Enna Thavam Seithanai" in Kapi. The 'Sangathi' in the verse "Uralil kaddi vaai pothy Enga vaithai" reminded me of Lalgudi, who, about 30 years ago, played the same Sangathi at the Indian YMCA in London. Sri Raguraman accompanied Sri Ramh on the violin well.

When the Head Teachers or Form Tutors speak at Arangetrams, they normally refer to the academic achievements of the debutant. I was pleasantly surprised when Kumaran's Head Teacher spoke of Kumaran's Miruthangam playing.

Smt Anantharani Balendra, an experienced presenter compered the arangetam in a professional manner.

Sri Prakash can be proud of his two disciples. The London 'Rasikas' have two good miruthangam players added to their group.

-Hindolam

Veena Arangetram of Darshini



The Veena Arangetram (Debut) of Darshini Thavarajah was held in Beck Theatre, Hayes, on 21st September 2003 to the immense delight of a packed audi-

ence. She was presented by her Guru, Smt Suthamathy Srisatkunam, Director of Mathangi Fine Arts Academy, Harrow, under whose tutelage Darshini was trained in veena since the tender age of eight. The art of playing the veena and singing simultaneously is called gayaka veena. Darshini's proficiency of playing the gayaka veena had been the highlight of this delightful arangetram.

The first part of this arangetram enabled her to present the technical aspects of carnatic music and draw the fans of the same calibre. The arangetram started off with 'Virutham', Mathangi Fine Arts Academy anthem in ragams Tilang, Hamsadhvani.

Darshini chose 'Nera nammi, Ata Thala varnam for her opening composi-

tion and did the composer Ramana-thapuram Srinivasa Iyengar proud by doing it justice by rendering it with an amazing precision of Sruthi Layam and meticulous co-ordination, followed by Gajana Nayutam in Ragam Chakravakam and Adi Thalam, which was her introductory gayaka veena composition that attracted all sections of the audience regardless of their carnatic musical knowledge, her joy at sharing the music was portrayed in her smile throughout the arangetram.

Subsequently 'Entharo mahanu' in Sri Ragam and Adi Thalam by Sri Thiagarajah Swamigal was followed by a Mathimakala Kirtana Mamavathu Sri in Hindola Ragam rendered with Ragam-Thanam, Niraval and Kalpana Svaram. Hindola is a beautiful ragam when played on veena and indisputably it was rendered very well. Prior to the interval Ragam-Thanam-Pallavi was followed by 'Nagumomaganalen' in Abheri ragam and Adi Thalam composed by Sri Thiagaraja Swamigal. She played niraval in medium and fastest speed in addition kalpana svaram was played in raga malika consisting of 4 ragas namely Simmedramadyamam, Kapi, Panthuvrali, and Madyamavathy. One can elaborately play Ragam-Thanam-Pallavi to reveal their true talent and the degree of their mano tharma sang-eetham, Ragam-Thanam-Pallavi was crafted in a style of dialogue with the most gifted accompanying artistes which was performed for more than 45 minutes and revealed her enthusiasm and hard work as an individual and the accompanying artistes made it a success.

The Mirudamgam player Sri M. Balachandar is well known in the international arena as a leading percussionist. Gatam was by Bangalore Sri. R.N. Prakash and Thampura by Mas. Raman Thavarajah, the younger brother of Darshini, who is a student of carnatic and western music. Compere Smt Sumathy Suresan is a well known TV presenter and programme producer in London and trained in carnatic music at the Music Academy, Madras.

To an avalanche of applause Darshini commenced the second part of the arangetram with the well-known composition in Tamil, 'Kaliyuga Varathan' in Brindavanasaranga ragam and Adi Thalam, and eloquently began with an introductory interlude and performed the gayaka Veena. A wide choice of Tamil compositions was one of the key aspects of this Arangetram. Conveying Ragam-malika (as the name suggests, garlands of ragas) in veena is a challenging act, but in addition, concentrating on singing was evident of a genius artiste. The Tamil

compossession 'Katpagavalli nin' in Raga-malika and Adi Thalam by Yahlpanam Veeramani Iyer was her next item pertaining to the worship of goddess Durga. The arangetram was in full swing when the padam 'Asainthadum' in Samendramadhyamam in Adi Thalam, which is famous amongst bharatanatya artistes, which Darshini rendered beautifully.

Speeches followed by the composition 'Thamarai Pootha' in ragam Hindustani Kanthaari and Adi thalam illustrated the elegance of the Tamil language and once again mesmerized the audiences with its divine melodies. Chief Guest Shri T.V. Ramanathan

complimented Darshini by articulating his experience of viewing the arangetram as equal to enjoying a katcheri in Madras, consequently Darshini won a part in his orchestra. Tharanny Srisatkunam spoke on behalf of Mathangy Fine Arts Academy and congratulated Darshini on her unrivalled performance, then the Guru awarded her a shield with the title of 'Isai Thendral'.

Thillana composed by Balamurali Krishna which Darshini was taught in vocal by the very composer, then customary Thirupukal and magalam concluded the arangetram marvellously.

- Charanee

Vocal Vibrant Debut



It was an interesting experience to witness Anandini Yoganathan's Carnatic Vocal Arangetram on 2 November, 2003 at Beck Theatre. The stage decor attracted the arriving invitees, the backdrop recreating the ambience of Pandurangan Temple at Thennangur and Swami Gnanananda Giri Peeta Ashram. The Brochure brought out for the occasion was a storehouse of information, spiritual and musical. Her parents' Guru Bhakthi for their Spiritual Sathguru Sri Haridhos Giri has truly formed the basis for Anandini's Musical Guru Bhakthi; and she, in turn, has turned out to be a worthy disciple of her Guru, Mrs. Saraswathy Packiarasah. It is indeed much due to the ardour and commitment of parents like the Yoganathans for the cultural advancement of their children, that the latter have blossomed into the young musicians of today in the U.K.

Starting her recital with a Guru Sthuthi, Anandini sang Bhairavi Ata Thala Varnam, with pleasing Gati variations in Charanam and Swarams. The Pancharathna piece in Raga Nattai was rendered faultlessly. The delineation of Shanmukhapriya Raga was pleasant and the item 'Parvathy Nayakane' which

followed was evocatively sung, with the full Bhava brought out in the phrase 'Nee Maravaadenaiyal Jagadeesa'. The Ragam, Thanam and her Guru's Pallavi in Raga Kharaharapriya drew sustained applause from the discerning audience. The recital concluded with Sri Lalgudi Jayaraman's Mohana Kalyani Thillana followed by Mangalam.

Deft raga touches on Violin by K. T. Sivaganesh in Vasantha, Shanmukhapriya, Mohanam and Kharaharapriya showed his class. The Thani Avarthanam by M. Balachander on Mridangam, R.N. Prakash on Ghatam and K. Sithamparanathan on Morsing was a scintillating team effort. It was pleasing to hear the Mridangam accompaniment by Anandini's brother Hariharan and to note the strides made by him since his own Arangetram in 1997, at which I was privileged to speak.

There was a galaxy of spiritual and cultural V.I.P.'s who graced the occasion: Sri Chaithyananthanatha as Chief Guest and H.H. Swami Namananda Giri, Srimathy Kalyani Mami, Sri S.P. Ramh and Dr. R. Niththyananthan as Guests of Honour, all of whom contributed to the success of the evening.

P.P. Kanthan.

Australian Newsletter

The concept of multiculturalism is conspicuously vibrant in Australia and continues to forge unity among ethnic communities with diverse cultures. It manifested distinctly during the Annual Multicultural Banquet in Clayton with the theme "Living in Peace and Harmony" where Hon Nicola Roxon, Shadow Attorney General was the guest of honour and other guests included several federal and state parliamentarians, local councillors and community representatives. No doubt, it was one amongst many such momentous occasions revealing the magnitude of multiculturalism. Two of the institutional providers of Tamil language education in Victoria, Eelam Tamil Association's Tamil School Board and Bharathy Academy prolifically conducted their annual cultural events and the range of talents displayed by children in Tamil language and in dance, drama and instruments received admiration from all those present. TAMMEDAid, a non-profit organization targeting to assist in health care sector in the North and East Tamil areas had a grand fund raising cultural show in Melbourne and continues to receive espousal from Tamils living across Australia. It is worth mentioning that a stupendous concept is gaining momentum through the activities of Interfaith Network in Australia. Established in 1989 and it encompasses faiths such as Baha'i, Buddhists, Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish and Sikh. It advocates the dogma of "Many faiths, One people" and prompting yet another sustainable endowment to multiculturalism. The scope available for children to develop skills in various Tamil art forms in Melbourne, Sydney and other major cities in Australia are enormous and it is reflected in the number of student concerts in various cities. In Melbourne, students of Rama Sivarajah on Violin and Vocal, Meena Elankumaran and duo Yamini Paranetharan & Rushani Puvanenthirarajah on Bharathanatyam were put on show recently. Many in the audience had admiration for the dedication of both teachers and students. Tamil literary functions are gaining verve and recently Mr S Sriskantha-

Appeal for the Supply and Installation of 2 Haemo dialyser Machines, Gambro Model AK95 at the Jaffna General Hospital. Total Value: Rs. 3,400,000 (approx £ 21,000)

I am informed by the Director of the Jaffna General Hospital through Mr. Aru Thirumurugan, that the only old dialyser machine at the Hospital has broken down beyond repair. As a result, the patients have been referred to Colombo Hospital and they are undergoing severe hardship in finding appropriate transport and accommodation. There appears to be an urgent need for us to help those in distress and do what is possible to alleviate the situation.

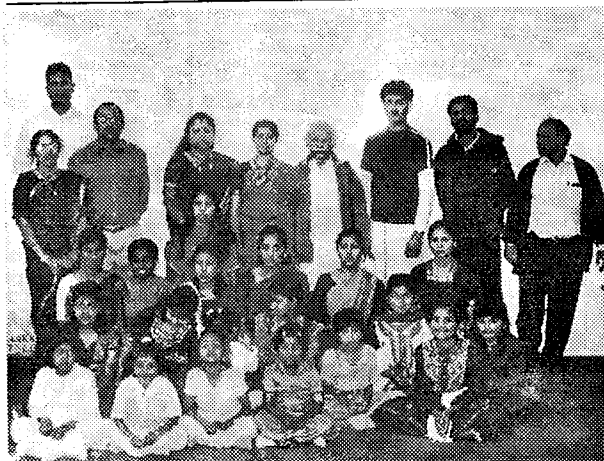
I have taken steps to open up Community Account No.60492655 Sort Code 208417 with Barclays Bank, Sutton Business Centre, under the name JAFFNA GENERAL HOSPITAL DIALYSIS MACHINE FUND. This ac-

count will be operated jointly by Mr. N.Kugadason (Kugan), an accountant and myself. On completion of this project, the account will be closed and a statement sent to all the donors.

Please send your donations in the name of JAFFNA GENERAL HOSPITAL DIALYSIS MACHINE FUND. Considering the urgency, we would like to secure at least one machine installed at the Jaffna Hospital by this Christmas. I would therefore appreciate your commitment to this noble cause as early as possible..

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Pathmasiri Adaiyar Lakshman feted in London



The world renowned Bharatha Natiyam celebrity Pathmasiri Adaiyar K.

Lakshman visited London in October 2003 and graciously agreed to conduct a two-day workshop at the Hendon Tamil School, where his senior disciple Natiya Sironmani Bharatha Chudamani Vasanthakumari Sinnathamby is a dance teacher. The picture above was taken on that occasion along with the Head Teacher of the school Sumathy Sivamohan, members of the school management committee and dance students.

rajah, a lawyer and an ardent Tamil activist released two of his Tamil books in a humble yet an impressive ceremony in Preston. Jaffna Hindu College OBA in New South Wales celebrated its tenth anniversary in an imposing ceremony. Annual Maveerar Naal was commemo-

rated in various parts of Australia and in New Zealand and the local Tamil fortnightly, Eelamurasu, released special number on the occasion.

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