

People's Alliance captures power

AFTER 17 years in opposition, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and its People's Alliance (PA) snatched the narrowest of victories in Sri Lanka's general election held on 17 August.

The PA won 105 seats, eight short of an outright majority in the 225-seat parliament but is backed by the seven seats of allies, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and one Independent, P Chandrasekaran of the Upcountry People's Front (UPF).

Their major rivals, the ousted United National Party (UNP) won 94 seats and allied Tamil group EPDP secured nine after a pantomime poll in Jaffna where only 13,000 of 600,000 registered voters could vote - unable to cross the battle lines of the 11-year civil war.

Two other Tamil parties, TULF with five seats and DPLF, the political arm of militant group PLOTE with three seats remain neutral. They have pledged to support the new government on a issue-by-issue basis.

Results from the north were strategically withheld while UNP politicians unsuccessfully bartered with Tamil parties to support a national government. As lights burned late into the night in Colombo, many believed the UNP would not give up its 17-year grip on power. Further attempts by party heavyweight Gamini Dissanayake to form a minority government were only vetoed by outgoing Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe in a series of last minute manoeuvres.

PA deputy leader, Mrs Chandrika Kumaranatunge, 48, daughter of the world's first woman Prime Minister and heir to a political dynasty was sworn in as Prime Minister on 19 August. She announced a 23-strong cabinet including her ailing mother, Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike as minister without portfo-

Rumour swirled around Colombo before and after the election, of a plot to kill new Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaranatunge. She abruptly suspended campaign appearances for 24 hours on 9 August after allegations involving Tamil group EPDP. The arrival of former Army chief Lt. Gen. Cecil Waidyaratne sparked more rumours of an election day military coup. Opposition leader Gamini Dissanayake dismissed a bungled assassination attempt on Chandrika in Kandy in early September as "a hoax".

Opposition victory spurs peace hopes

lio and leading Colombo Tamil lawyer Lakshman Kadirgamar as Foreign minister. Muslim Congress leader MHM Ashraff is Shipping and Rehabilitation minister and Mrs Srimani Athulathmudali, widow of assassinated UNP-DUNF politician Lalith Athulathmudali is Transport and Women's Affairs minister.

Chandrika's streamlined cabinet - the previous UNP government had 86 ministers is part of her campaign commitment to stamp out corruption and "crony capitalism". But her new administration with its fragile majority will find it doubly difficult to force through legislation with a UNP president who retains executive powers under the present Gaullist constitution.

The new regime's first crisis was narrowly averted when President DB Wijetunge was forced to relinquish the Finance ministry to the new Prime Minister and to allow the State Defence minister Col. Anuruddha Ratwatte to effectively run the Army.

The defeated UNP remains crisis-ridden and increasingly factionalised. Gamini Dissanayake took revenge on outgoing Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe by forcing a vote a week later to elect the leader of the opposition which he won by three votes. Mr Dissanayake is positioning himself to take over the presidential candidacy in presidential elections only three months away in November.

The new PA government lacks the two-thirds parliamentary majority to fulfil its election pledge to dismantle the executive presidency and Chandrika may be forced to run for president to consolidate her fragile hold on power. An offer

from Mr Dissanayake to provide UNP support in parliament to dissolve the presidency was brushed aside in late August.

Widespread post-election vio-

lence, traditional in Sri Lanka, was averted by a week-long curfew and by Mrs Kumaranatunge immediately sending new PA MPs back to their constituencies to control party cadre on the ground. Some 158 incidents were reported on polling day and over 400 Tamil youths from the North-East were arrested in Colombo, a week earlier, to prevent sabotage attacks by the insurgent Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Chandrika's election pledge to end the 11-year civil war was echoed by an offer of immediate peace talks from LTTE political adviser Anton Balasingham in Jaffna newspaper *Eelanadan* on 26 August, providing the government declared a ceasefire, lifted the military blockade and opened a safe passage for one million war-weary civilians in the Jaffna peninsula.

Chandrika promptly lifted the northern ban on 28 of 42 embargoed items including kerosene, cement and bicycles. The Tigers in turn released ten of 49 police and Army prisoners in the first of what will have to be a series of confidence building exchanges. LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran confirmed his willingness to open peace talks, inviting Chandrika to Jaffna, in a letter delivered to Colombo by the ICRC in early September.

Face-to-face negotiations are still a long way off. Chandrika's preliminary intermediary is likely to be former Jaffna Government Agent Lionel Fernando. *Thamilchelvam*, fast emerging as Prabhakaran's de facto deputy, will lead the Tiger team.

Optimism remains guarded. The Tigers may simply use the talks as a breathing space to regroup and reprovise as they did for 15 months with the Premadasa government in 1989. Chandrika's fragile majority depends on support from the Muslim Congress and tacit backing from the other Tamil parties who the Tigers will seek to exclude from the negotiating table. A formula to bind the wounds of the past as well as fill the expectations of the future, will be hard to find.

Pantomime poll in the north

THE MAJORITY of observers say Sri Lanka's 1994 general election was largely free and fair in the south but describe the poll in Jaffna and other northern districts as little more than a farce. Over 8.3 million votes were cast with a 82% turn out in the south and 76% island-wide. But only 13,000 of 600,000 registered voters in Jaffna could vote, 2,000 of 52,000 in Mullaitivu, 18,000 of 54,000 in Mannar and 23,000 of 72,000 in Vavuniya. The votes cast in polling booths clustered in Army-controlled areas of Kayts, Tellipalai, Vavuniya and Mannar went mostly to the men with guns - EPDP and PLOTE's political wing DPLF.

The report of a 44-strong official International Observers group said no free and fair election was possible in Jaffna. A splinter group led by former Amnesty International Secretary General, Ian Martin, appended a stronger statement condemning the Jaffna polls, and drawing attention to the climate of violence and intimidation island-wide in the run-up to the election. A separate Observers' statement from the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) said the northern elections "were not only un-free and unfair" but that "the genuineness of the same election is questionable". Local monitoring group PAFREL said northern MPs have no mandate from the people, describing the result as a gross distortion of the democratic process.

EPDP leader Douglas Devananda predictably, disagrees. He and eight other EPDP MPs were returned from Jaffna constituencies like Nallur where eight people voted for them or 40 in Kopya. The official Observers' report confirms the presence of armed EPDP cadre prevented others canvassing on the Jaffna islands and that there was fraudulent voting on Delft assisted by election officials.

Muslim Congress leader MHM Ashraff, expecting to gain three or four seats from 15,000 Jaffna Muslim refugees registered in Puttalam, says over 3,000 SLMC supporters were turned away by election officials. SLMC took one seat in Jaffna and another in Vavuniya. Few of the 100,000 northern refugees in Colombo's cheap lodging houses registered to vote despite vigorous canvassing by Tamil parties.

PLOTE leader D Sitharthan, one of three DPLF MPs elected from the Vanni, denied that there were election irregularities in his Vavuniya stronghold. Over 100,000 of 170,000 Vanni voters were trapped in LTTE-controlled areas. Everyone knew they would not be able to vote, but the authorities chose to go ahead with the election, he argued.

The government's dilemma was that if polling was cancelled or invalidated in any area, 29 National List MPs could not be chosen under Sri Lanka's complex proportional representation system and the UNP caretaker cabinet would remain in power - a ploy that would have sparked riots in the streets. Now that the government has changed hands Tamil group TULF and SLMC will go back to the courts to have the Jaffna and Vanni results declared null and void.

The Cabinet

President DB Wijetunge: Minister for Defence and Buddhist Affairs.

Chandrika Kumaranatunge: Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Planning, Ethnic Affairs and National Integration.

Sirimavo Bandaranaike: Minister without portfolio.

Ratnasiri Wickremanayake: Public Administration and Plantation Affairs.

Lakshman Jayakody: Cultural and Religious Affairs.

Bernard Soyza: Science Development and Human Resources Development.

DM Jayaratne: Agriculture, Land and Forestry Conservation.

Mahinda Rajapakse: Labour and Vocational training.

MHM Ashraff: Shipping, Ports and Rehabilitation.

Anurudha Ratwatte: Irrigation, Power and Energy.

Dharmasiri Senanayake: Information, Tourism and Aviation.

CV Goonaratne: Industrial Development

Richard Pathirana: Education and Higher Education

Kingsley Wickremasinghe: Trade, Commerce and Food.

Nimal Siripala de Silva: Housing, Construction and Public Utilities.

Mangala Samaraweera: Posts and Telecommunications.

SB Dissanayake: Youth, Sport and Rural Development.

Amarasiri Dodangoda: Home Affairs, Local Government and Cooperatives.

Srimani Athulathmudali: Transport, Highways, Environment and Women's Affairs.

GL Peiris: Justice, Constitutional Affairs.

AHM Fowzie: Health and Social Services.

Lakshman Kadirgamar: Foreign Affairs.

Indika Goonawardene: Fisheries.

Final party positions

DISTRICTS	% turnout	PA	UNP	TULF	SLMC	UPF	SLPF	EPDP	TNUF	Total
Colombo	77.6	11	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	20
Gampaha	81.5	11	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
Kalutara	82.1	5	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
Kandy	83.7	5	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
Matale	84.3	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Nuwara Eliya	83.7	3	5	-	-	1	-	-	-	9
Galle	81.2	6	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Matara	78.8	5	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
Hambantota	79.6	4	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	7
Jaffna	2.3	-	-	-	1	-	-	9	-	10
Vavuniya	25.3	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	3	6
Batticaloa	72.4	-	1	3	1	-	-	-	-	5
Digamadulla	81.3	1	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	6
Trincomalee	68.8	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	4
Kurunegala	84.1	8	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
Puttalam	77.3	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
Anuradhapura	83.9	5	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
Poionaruwa	83.7	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Badulla	84.0	3	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
Moneragala	85.8	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Ratnapura	87.3	6	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Kegalle	82.9	4	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
National List		14	13	1	1	-	-	-	-	29
TOTAL	76.2	105	94	5	7	1	1	9	3	225

■ A storm of shelling hits Jaffna

Suicide mission

THE TIGERS sent their own election day message on 16 August, when female suicide commando *Angayatkanni* steered a torpedo into Jaffna's Kankesanthurai harbour destroying a naval communications command ship and a Dvora fast attack craft. She was the first female *Black Tiger* to undertake a suicide mission. Her portrait was paraded through northern villages in massive propaganda rallies organised by LTTE in late August.

Air strikes and artillery attacks by the Sri Lankan military to shore up their fragile foothold around Kankesanthurai and the western Jaffna islands have continued. Savarimuthu Rodriguez, 19, and Dharmarajah Rajalaxumy, 35, were killed and nine other civilians injured in air attacks at Mallakam in early August. Two others died when Atchuvveli

Cooperative Canteen was bombed.

Local people spent much of mid August in the bunkers as a storm of shelling from Palaly and Karaitivu followed the *Angayatkanni* suicide attack. St Anthony's church in Alaveddy south was badly damaged and Murugan Joseph, 43, and his son Dayal were killed in shelling at Point Pedro.

Five people were killed and 25 wounded including women and children, when Atchuvveli was shelled again in mid August. Over 30 houses were destroyed. Naval gunboats killed two fishermen off Mandaithivu in early August. The Defence ministry described them as Tiger cadre.

The Tigers have stepped up attacks on the Pooneryn Army Camp on the southwest shore of the lagoon. Over 19 LTTE

cadre died in an Army ambush in early August and another four in a skirmish, three weeks later.

Food stocks in Jaffna have stabilised but long-term malnutrition is taking its toll. A six-month study of 5,000 school-children by Jaffna Municipal Health Department says 70% of students are malnourished and some display symptoms of psychological damage.

Further south on isolated Mannar island, LTTE cadre hidden in a hijacked bus, opened fire on a police post at the BMC building in Mannar town, killing 11 policemen on 11 August. The building was badly damaged by Tiger bombs. Election campaigning was suspended and curfew imposed.

Reports from Madhu further west, say the Tigers are planning to replace the UN-run refugee camp with resettlement schemes for its 30,000 inhabitants. Over 100 families from the camp arrived in Chettikulam in late August after LTTE announced refugees were also free to return south to Army-controlled areas.

In a reprisal for air attacks on a Tiger base at Silavathurai on the Mannar coast, *Sea Tigers* abducted 19 Sinhalese and Muslim fishermen off the Kalpitiya peninsula in early August. The Tigers killed 26 fishermen in a similar attack in March.

One civilian was killed and four injured in late August in air attacks at Omanthai, close to the Tiger checkpoint that guards the two miles of no-mans-land separating the two forces north of Vavuniya.

Players

A HUNG parliament and a fragile ruling coalition. The elections have thrown up new players from the Tamil community in positions of potential influence and power. Colombo academic Dr Neelan Tiruchelvam who returns to Parliament as a TULF National List MP is a confidant of new Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaranatunge and a leading actor in the lobby for a federal constitution. Dr Tiruchelvam reportedly turned down the post of parliamentary Speaker to leave himself free to caucus. Batticaloa TULF MP P Joseph has strengthened his power base and TULF's Thangathurai returns as a Trincomalee MP.

Muslim Congress leader MHM Ashraff, as official coalition partner and Shipping and Rehabilitation minister will now play an influential role in North-East issues. He will fight hard for over 80,000 Tamil-speaking Muslims expelled from the north by Tiger ultimatum in September 1990. Colombo Tamil lawyer Lakshman Kadirgamar, as the PA's Foreign minister is a parliamentary novice but has a wealth of international experience.

DPLF leader and new Vavuniya MP, D Sitharthan, has pledged his support to the government. The son of former Jaffna MP Dharmalingam, his family has remained close to the Bandaranaiques for many years. Some 127 MPs backed the PA's eventual choice for Speaker, Jaffna-educated KB Ratnayake, on 25 August, producing 14 potential allies to bolster the PA's perilous one seat majority. The losers are Tamil groups EPRLF and EPDP - despite their nine new Jaffna MPs. EPRLF lost all its seats and has called a crisis conference to review its strategy. EPDP is increasingly isolated as the beneficiary of Jaffna's pantomime poll and its unsavoury reputation as a militia aligned to the previous government. EPDP leader Douglas Devananda has made a number of overtures to Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaranatunge to little avail. But she may yet need his seats.

Election airlift

LTTE launched a new series of offensives in the east in the run-up to the elections. Over 150 Tigers attacked an elite Army camp at Kathumurivukulam in the Vaharai jungles north of Batticaloa on 12 August. In a two-hour battle, 11 soldiers and 20 LTTE were killed. There were simultaneous attacks on three Army camps in Trincomalee. Casualties are unknown. Two policemen also died in a landmine ambush at Uppuveli, north of Trincomalee town on the eve of election day. Amparai was tense after a nurse from French medical agency, *Medecins Sans Frontieres* (MSF) was seriously wounded and her Sinhalese companion shot dead by Special Task Force (STF) police commandos at Thirukovil on 9 August. There were clashes between UNP and SLMC supporters around Kalmunai hospital after the son of a for-

mer SLMC MP was wounded by unknown gunmen. Four Tamil parties split the 60,000-strong Tamil vote in Amparai and no Tamil MPs were returned. UNP took three seats SLMC one and PA one.

In Batticaloa, despite Tiger leaflets and bomb explosions at Mavadvembu and Kurinjamunai, the voter turnout was 72% on election day. Many polling stations, for electorates west of the lagoon threatened or controlled by LTTE, were clustered on the coastal strip. Over 18 ballot boxes were airlifted to the central counting centre after threats of interference from armed Tamil groups. TULF took three seats, SLMC one, and UNP one. In Trincomalee District, there was little election violence says the official Observers report. UNP took two seats, TULF one and SLMC one.

Bread, jobs and peace are Chandrika's priorities

promises to keep

"*Bread, Jobs and Peace*" was the slogan that secured a PA victory. Now the new government has to deliver. There will be a peace dividend of \$600 million a year in current military expenditure when the North-East conflict is settled says SLFP General Secretary, Dharmasiri Senanayake which will be invested in youth employment and development. Keeping the first of many promises the government reduced the price of bread by 30% to Rs 3.50 in early September.

The new regime vows to root out 17 years of kickbacks and crony capitalism. The priority is breaking the grip of politicians on the economy. Over \$400 million is said to be missing from the Treasury including \$2 million in foreign aid from South Korea embezzled by a former minister. New probes have begun into all outstanding government contracts and the notoriously corrupt tendering system.

A Russian arms deal worth \$72 million has been cancelled and a \$20 million telecommunications contract suspended.

Other investigations are underway involving \$275 million owed for three French Airbus planes and a \$15 million loss on 2,500 buses from British firm Duple Metsac.

Bribery Commissioner, Mrs Nelum Gamage, suspended by the previous regime when she probed prominent government politicians has been reappointed with wide-ranging powers. A shake-out is underway in Sri Lanka's diplomatic service where the relatives of UNP politicians enjoy well-paid sinecures and among the political appointees that chair State corporations. There will be no budget until February 1995 to give the new government time to balance the books and survey the full extent of the damage.

The PA government also plans to indict the UNP years of human rights atrocities by setting up a National Human Rights Commission and new Commissions of Enquiry into disappearances and extra-judicial killings since January 1988. Over 40,000 people died

or disappeared between 1987 and 1990 during the Army's brutal suppression of the Sinhala Marxist People's Liberation Front (JVP) insurrection. Embilipitiya schoolteacher Dayanda Galapatty, implicated in the murder of 32 students by the Army in 1989, has been suspended pending further investigations. Over 8,000 fundamental rights cases against police and Army officials have been registered in Sri Lankan courts since 1987.

Other Commissions will investigate the assassinations of President Premadasa, Lalith Athulathmudali and film-star politician Vijaya Kumaranunge murdered by Sinhala extremists in 1989, after a peace mission to Jaffna with his wife - the new Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaranatunge.

Chandrika has vowed to fulfill all election pledges within three months, including unemployment benefit for over a million alienated southern youth. After the years of tragedy, collective and individual, the honeymoon is underway.

Thondaman seeks new partners in power

THE People's Alliance (PA) victory at the general elections has put the Plantation Tamils in an awkward position. Hill Country voters overwhelmingly supported Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) candidates contesting on the UNP ticket.

In five major Plantation districts, the UNP polled 52% of the votes while the PA received 45% as against the national voting of 44% for UNP and 48.9% for PA. Eight Plantation Tamils, including Up-Country People's Front (UPF) leader P Chandrasekaran were elected as MPs.

Colombo PA list candidate former CWC General Secretary MS Sellasamy failed to be elected, as did ACTC leader Kumar Ponnambalam. There are over 300,000 Tamil voters in Colombo District. But their votes were fragmented among 55 different Tamil candidates and no Tamil was elected.

In the run-up to the elections two people were killed in clashes between rival trade unions in Nuwara-Eliya District. After the elections 15 shops were burned in Kandapola and workers fled following attacks on Brey Estate in Matale.

After the initial shock, CWC leader S

Thondaman, 82, wasted no time in offering his support to the PA. Mr Thondaman believes that the pre-election CWC-UNP pact does not prevent his party collaborating with the government and has had several rounds of talks with

Prime Minister Chandrika Bandaranaike. The agreement with UNP allows each party to act separately in Parliament. But some senior CWC officials say it is "not worth the paper it is written on". UNP General Secretary Gamini Wijesekere concedes Mr Thondaman is free to do as he pleases, but warns that as a UNP National List MP he would lose his seat in parliament if he sides with the government. CWC is seeking legal opinion.

There is concern over Plantation Workers' outstanding problems such as ownership of line-rooms. National Union of Workers General Secretary PV Kandiah says ownership certificates issued to workers immediately before elections have now been withdrawn.

Some observers believe UPF's P Chandrasekaran, Deputy Minister of Trade in the new government, will not be able to emulate the power wielded by Mr Thondaman and force concessions from the government, particularly because the UPF support-base is confined to Talawakelle. Others say given the time Mr Chandrasekaran could provide fresh and dynamic leadership to Plantation Tamils.

THE SRI LANKA MONITOR is part of an information processing service set up by the British Refugee Council to keep Sri Lankan refugees in Britain, Europe and elsewhere, informed about the current situation in their home areas.

If you have any information you wish to share, or any enquiries you wish to make regarding developments in Sri Lanka, contact

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