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of what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it."

-Voltaire

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NEWS REVIEW

"Victory Assured" Vs "Do or Die"

The LTTE, involving an estimated 1000 of its fighters, launched a predawn major attack - code-named "Operation Do or Die" - on 10 June on the army camp at Thandikulam, where the operational headquarters of the 55th Division, from where the ongoing operation Jaya Sikuru was launched on 13 May. (See special article by D.B.S. Jeyaraj on page 12). The LTTE commenced its assault on the camp with an artillery barrage from the direction of Shastrikoolankulam situated south-west of Vavuniya. The initial barrage resulted in a direct hit upon a military ammunition dump setting off a series of explosions leading to the complete destruction of the camp. The long range artillery assault was followed by a human-wave attack from several directions.

The military was caught off-guard since their focus had been on pushing the offensive forward towards Mankulam. Despite military analysts raised questions during the previous two weeks and highlighted the difficulty of securing the rear as the troops advanced, the attack nevertheless came as a shock.

Reports from Vavuniya state that it took over 8 hours for reinforcements to approach the area which had come under LTTE assault. The blowing up of the bridge at Thandikulam also created a major obstacle to the transport of troops and equipment.

The battle for the Thandikulam camp left over 15 civilians dead and many more injured. Over 300 soldiers are reported to have killed, many more injured and a dozen or so missing. The LTTE in a statement said that 80 of its cadres, 21 women included, were killed in the encounter, but did not give any figure for the injured.

It is reported that the LTTE held Thandikulam for almost 36 hours before withdrawing in the face of the counter-assault by the troops. But during their period the camp was under its control, the LTTE cadres managed to take away three lorry-loads of food, medicines and arms and ammunition from the camp.

Some of the missing military personnel might have been taken prisoner by the LTTE. Writing in the Sunday Times, the

well informed columnist, Taraki, said, "The LTTE is looking not only for special instruments and artillery pieces in the military bases which they overwhelm and destroy, but also for Sri Lankan army officers with special skills. It has benefited greatly from what it has been able to extract from these officers through coercion and persuasion. Some are even working with them."

During the fighting, Vavuniya town itself became target for LTTE's long-range artillery attacks. Persons residing in the area said that a large number of shells fell within the Vavuniya town and that there were also reports of persons killed in the crossfire when fleeing from Thandikulam towards Vavuniya. Several thousands of persons have been freshly displaced and are in four main welfare centres in the vicinity of Vavuniya.

Coming in the wake of a comment by Deputy Defence Minister a few weeks ago that the LTTE had turned into 'jackals', commentators point out that this sneak attack proved the point that the LTTE, although facing setbacks on the military front, may yet turn out to be as crafty as the proverbial jackal.

Govt to Go Ahead on Devolution

As the main opposition United National Party (UNP) is seeking to stall government's efforts to progress the deliberations in the Parliamentary Select Committee, the Sri Lankan government is reported to have decided to present to Parliament the draft constitution, including the devolution package, before November this year, with a view to holding a non-binding referendum afterwards.

According to senior government sources, the President is said to have made this decision after reviewing the outcome of the Parliamentary Select Committee process. The Select Committee, these sources say, has now reached an impasse, with the UNP deploying delaying tactics. The UNP is believed to have decided to stall the Select Committee exercise on such key constitutional issues as, altering the unitary state clause and the unit of devolution in the North-East, by

either opposing the government proposals or not taking a stand at all.

Meanwhile, some consensus is emerging among the Tamil parties and the SLMC on the question of the unit of devolution in the North-East provinces. Amidst dissent expressed by Douglas Devananda's EPDP, other Tamil parties have reached an understanding with the SLMC on a three-point formula for the North-East. The proposal, which is yet to take a formal shape, envisages the linking of an area of the Amparai district, which has a majority Sinhala population, with the Uva province; the creation of a separate unit for Muslim majority areas in Amparai and Batticaloa districts, and the merger of the Tamil majority areas of the East with the North. The EPDP, which is opposed to this formula, wants the merger of the present Northern and Eastern provinces.

When the draft constitution is presented to Parliament, this arrangement on the unit of devolution will be incorporated into the devolution package. The previous versions of the package did not deal with the question of the unit, only with the extent of devolution.

PA sources, meanwhile, expressed some anxiety about how the UNP would react to the unit proposal. The UNP has two options: the first, outright opposition to the unit, is not an easy option because of fears that the party may get decisively isolated from the minorities; the soft option available to the UNP, is to allow its Sinhala nationalist and Colombo-based Muslim politicians to oppose the proposal, while the party leadership raised other political issues regarding the government's overall strategy on the ethnic question.

Some sections of the UNP have already begun to question the steps taken by the government with regard to the devolution package. Ranil Wickremasinghe, Tyronne Fernando and a few others have been saying that the devolution package, even if it is passed by Parliament, will serve no tangible purpose without a parallel process of negotiation with the LTTE.

Meanwhile, the government leaders appear to be getting ready to launch a major political campaign, in view of a possible referendum on the draft constitution and the devolution package. President Kumaratunga met with Tamil political parties over the weekend to explain the government's line of action. Tamil political leaders were in an upbeat mood after Kumaratunga had given them a strong commitment to the political process. Informed sources say Kumaratunga told the Tamil parties that she would even risk her entire political career in going before the people with the devolution package.

In what was clearly a move to prepare the public's mood for the referendum, last week, Deputy Defence Minister

Anuruddha Ratwatte went to Dimbulagala in the Eastern Province, along with Constitutional Affairs Minister G. L. Pieris, and said at a public meeting that the victories in the battle front would have to be supported by a political settlement to the ethnic question. Ratwatte reiterated the argument in an interview published in the state-owned Daily News on June 2.

"Pakistan Helping Sri Lanka" says LTTE:

Tamil Tigers have accused the Pakistani military of helping the Sri Lankan army plan in its current offensive against them, but Pakistan and Sri Lanka have denied the charge.

A statement issued on 13 June from the LTTE's international secretariat in London said that it had received information that Pakistani military had helped the Sri Lankan army to plan the latest major military offensive against the LTTE begun a month ago.

The statement added that Pakistani officials converged at the army headquarters in Anuradhapura in the north central province of Sri Lanka, immediately prior to the launch of the offensive on May 13th. The Tamil Tigers said that the information about Pakistani involvement came from reliable independent sources.

A spokesman for the Pakistan High Commission in Colombo denied that his country was in anyway involved in the ongoing conflict in Sri Lanka. He said Pakistan did not interfere in the internal affairs of any country.

The Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry spokesman said the charge was utterly baseless and described it as an attempt by the Tigers to mislead the international community in order to divert attention from the reversals the LTTE had suffered in the military operation.

The Cabinet Reshuffle

Following weeks of speculation, on June 9 the President Chandrika Kumaratunga announced her new Cabinet of Ministers in the first major re-organisation since her People's Alliance government assumed power in 1994. The Cabinet is now expanded to include 30 members, including the President; seven new Ministries were created and eight Deputy Ministers were elevated to Ministerial rank. There are also eleven new Deputy Ministers. Critics commented that this expansion is in direct contradiction to one of the PA's election promises, which was to keep the size of the Cabinet down.

While there was a substantial reallocation of functions of previous ministers, the major casualty in the reshuffle was Mrs. Srimani Athulathmudali who held the post of Minister of Transport and Women's Affairs who failed to find a place in the revamped cabinet.

It was obvious that the President had been mindful of her promise to distribute Cabinet portfolios to reflect provinces representation. In the present configuration, the South-Western Province has one Minister and four Deputy Ministers; Ratnapura, Matale, Anuradhapura and Pollonnaruwa Provinces have also benefited from the re-shuffle.

However, the most observable feature of many of the new faces on the Cabinet as well as of the elevations from Deputy to Minister is that they all belong to the so-called Mulberry Group within the SLFP and are also ardent members of the Sudu Nelum (White Lotus) movement. Observers have, however, commented that leading figures in the mulberry group have been left out of this process.

MPs Dilan Perera and Dulles Alahapperuma, who along with the late Nalanda Ellawela provided the ideological and political strength to the dissident SLFPers, as well as Upali Gunaratne and Chamal Rajapakse, are among those who were not among the beneficiaries of the recent change. As this week's YUKTHIYA editorial comment points out, this may be a strategic step towards literally separating the head of the mulberry group from the body, and thereby weakening the dissidents.

At the same time, individuals who were most critical of the policies and performance of the PA government in certain areas have been given Deputy Ministerships in those very areas. For example, SLMP head, Y.P. de Silva, who wrote a critique of the government's food policy is now Deputy Minister of Food, while Reginald Cooray, a critic of the Samurdhi programme has become the Deputy Minister for Samurdhi.

Political commentators also point out that among those favoured by the reshuffle are several members of the PA who were allegedly involved in violations of election laws during the recent local government elections. This has led to the observation that this is an 'election' Cabinet, composed of those members of the PA who will support the government's devolution package at the forthcoming referendum.

The President retained the key Finance and Defence portfolios but let go of an important religious ministry handling Buddhist affairs which was handed over

to Lakshman Jayakody, the Minister for Cultural and Religious affairs.

Leading sections of the island's Buddhist clergy have traditionally played a vocal role in religio - ethnic politics, and since President Kumaratunga advanced the devolution proposals with a view to bring about an end to the ethnic conflict, the relations between the President and prominent leaders of the Buddhist clergy, who opposed her proposals, had become very strained. Her decision to allocate the Ministry of Buddhist Affairs to Richard Pathirana is seen as an attempt to defuse the situation.

Dharmasiri Senanayake retained his position in the cabinet as Minister of Aviation and Tourism but his responsibility for high profile functions relating to information and media were removed which were given to Mangala Samaraweera the Post and Telecommunication Minister who has been described in the local press as a close confidant of the President. Dharmasiri's stock fell after the inglorious defeat of the government's Broadcasting Bill which was summarily overruled as unconstitutional by the country's Supreme Court.

The youthful and rebellious Minister for Labour and Vocational Training, Mahinda Rajapakse, who was seen as pro-labour by the business lobby, was shifted to Fisheries and Aquatic Resources. The Labour portfolio went to new entrant John Seneviratne. Health Minister Mohammed Fowzie was given Srimani's Transport and Highways portfolios, while Housing Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva was shifted to Health.

Amarasiri Dodangoda, the Minister of Co-operatives, Provincial Councils and Indigenous Medicine in the outgoing cabinet, was appointed Minister of Vocational Training and Rural Industries, a portfolio of reduced importance compared to the one he had previously.

Mrs. Srimala Bandaranaike was retained as Prime Minister. Lakshman Kadirgamar was reappointed Minister of Foreign Affairs and G.L. Peiris retained his portfolio for Justice and Constitutional Affairs. S Thondaman, the leader of Ceylon Workers Congress retained, his portfolio as Minister of Livestock Development and Estate Infrastructure.

Apart from Seneviratne who became Minister of Labour, the new ministers are: Mrs. Hema Ratnayake - Women's Affairs; Alavi Moulana - Local Government and Provincial Councils; Maithripala Sirisena - Mahavel Development; Jeyaraj Fernando - Plan Implementation and Parliamentary Affairs; Berty Premalal Dissanayake - Social Services; Nandimithra Ekanayake - Forestry and Environment; D.P. Wickramasinghe - Co-operatives Development.

Whither the DUNLF?

Srimani's exit from the cabinet was widely predicted after her party, Democratic United National (Lalith) Front (DUNLF) desisted from supporting the ruling Peoples Alliance coalition during the local government elections held last March. In fact, the DUNLF leadership was accused of supporting slate of candidates contesting as independents. Srimani, the leader of the DUNLF, has also made much publicised comments critical of the government's devolution proposals.

"Today's decision to remove me is another broken pledge violating the terms of agreement between our party and the People's Alliance," Srimani Athulathmudali said shortly after she was dropped from the cabinet. She said her party had always fearlessly expressed its views about abolition of executive presidency and the political package aimed at ending the country's ethnic war - two promises made by Kumaratunga's ruling coalition.

The removal of Mrs. Srimani Athulathmudali from the PA Cabinet has ironically placed the DUNLF back on its familiar theme: political victimology. In a statement issued soon after she lost her Cabinet position, Athulathmudali recalled how her late husband was persecuted by the Premadasa regime for standing for principles. She has interpreted her removal from Cabinet office as similar to Lalith's fate.

Smaller political parties, that are placed at the mercy of more powerful coalition leaders, usually survive on both victimology and heroism. And heroism the DUNLF is most likely to find as its theme during a possible referendum on constitutional reforms later on this year.

Much comment in the local press on the reshuffle has concentrated on its one notable victim, Srimani Athulathmudali, leader of DUNLF which is constituent member of the ruling PA coalition. Besides the failure of the DUNLF to support the PA in the local elections held last March, political observers predicted the departure of Srimani following recent sharp differences between DUNLF and the government over policy. Her sacking sent the message that the government was less tolerant of dissent within its ranks and it showed that the ruling leadership was willing to take on its detractors even at considerable risk to itself, according to one analyst.

The PA, which has a one-vote majority in Sri Lanka's 225-seat parliament, relies on the support of coalition members such as the DUNLF and other smaller groups to stay in power. It is unlikely that the DUNLF will pull out of the coalition overnight because of the sacking of its

leader from the cabinet and go over to the opposition. According to one analyst, the natural home of people like Srimani is the United National Party (UNP) of which her late husband Lalith Athulathmudali was a leading figure until he defected having crossed swords with the late President Premadasa. But, much as the UNP may like to have her, there may be problems for her joining the UNP at least in the near future. According to testimony given to the Judicial Commission probing into the assassination of Lalith Athulathmudali, some notable personalities of the UNP have been accused of having had links with the assassination of her husband. "It will be truly ironic if Srimani - the leader of DUNLF, a party formed in the name of and to honour the memory her late husband - were to join the UNP composed of those who were involved in her husband's murder," said a political critic.

A possible scenario for the DUNLF would be for its leadership to bide its time tolerating the present humiliation suffered at the hands of President Kumaratunga; and for Srimani Athulathmudali and her two loyalist MPs - Ravi Karunanayake and Kesarala Gunasekera - to remain with the PA government until the referendum on constitutional reforms is announced. During the campaign for the referendum, they will most probably leave the PA making a statement protesting against the devolution package with regional councils and changes to the unitary character of the State. They will also try to revive the vision of Lalith Athulathmudali, who had no conception at all of devolution of political power or a political settlement to the ethnic question. Such a move is most likely to be supported by the Ranil Wickremesinghe faction of the UNP which will, instead of directly opposing the devolution package, try to make use of as many disgruntled elements as possible against the PA government.

Resurrection of "Thimpu Principles"

The differences of opinion among Tamil political groups and parties regarding the devolution package and the political framework within which a solution to the ethnic conflict could be sought continue to create a dissonant note in the midst of the government's reiteration that the devolution package will be placed before Parliament very soon.

The EPDP continues to maintain that the 13th amendment to the Constitution forms a base for immediate implementation and improvements through negotiations, while other groups reject this idea out of hand. They seem to be banking on

an improved version of the devolution proposals put forward by the government.

Recently, AGOTIC (Action Group of Tamils in Colombo) organised a meeting of different Tamil political parties and groups in Colombo to canvass the idea that the proposals put forward at the Thimpu meeting in 1985 should form the basis in any negotiations with the government with regard to a resolution of the on-going ethnic conflict.

The Thimpu proposals were the result of a consensus between the TULF, PLOTE, LTTE, TELO, EPRLF and EROS at the time. They focused on four key features: the recognition of the Tamils of Sri Lanka as a separate nationality, the recognition of the North and East as the traditional homelands of the Tamils, acceptance of the right of the Tamils to self-determination and acceptance of the right of all Tamils living in Sri Lanka to citizenship of this country.

This meeting was attended by representatives of several Tamil political parties, including Kumar Ponnambalam (ACTC) N. Srikantha (TELO) Vijayasingham (CWC), while key individuals in the Tamil political arena were there, as they said, in their personal capacity. Among them were P. Devaraj (CWC), Chandrasekaran (UPF) and MP Thangathurai (TULF).

Speakers who expressed their reservations about using the Thimpu agreement as a basis for discussions, including TULF MP Thangathurai, were shouted down. Observers commented that the AGOTIC groups seemed to be advocating a position that was even more militant and radical than that espoused by the LTTE.

In Europe, representatives of the LTTE who are doing their round of the capitals are reported to be speaking of an 'unconditional ceasefire' and generally projecting a positive position vis-a-vis negotiations with the government.

In this context, commentators wonder whether the tactic is to put forward this ultra-radical line and thereby paralyse moderate Tamil opinion in Sri Lanka to the point that when the negotiations between the LTTE and the government take place, the LTTE will once more emerge as the 'sole representatives' of Tamil opinion in this country.

Dissension in the PA

All major political parties and coalitions in Sri Lanka appear to have entered a period of shake and jolt. Rifts within the ruling PA coalition, which are usually given wide coverage in the Colombo press, are now paralleled by potentially serious factionalism within the opposition UNP.

Recent weeks witnessed a series of developments that should attract the attention of any Sri Lanka watcher.

The Left partners of the PA government - the CP, LSSP and SLMP - exasperated over being continuously ignored by the President on key policy matters, held a seminar in Colombo to air their grievances. The left parties asserted that they would function as a group within the PA coalition. The left-wing parties are ideologically uncomfortable with the government's free market economic and social policies. They complain that their views are not taken into consideration at all by the government leadership. One left MP said that important legislation is presented to parliament by the government without any consultation whatsoever with the coalition allies. The PA leadership even expects the allies to defend such legislation in parliament. "Our support is taken for granted by the President. We don't like it at all," said another Left-wing MP.

The minor coalition partners, including the left parties, have also been quite unhappy with the way they were treated by the SLFP during the recently held local government elections. The left has been particularly incensed with the 'high-handed' attitude of the SLFP in selecting candidates for the local election. The SLFP candidates, they claim, were given preference in the candidate lists, and, in some places, some left and DUNLF activists, who were denied nominations, even contested the election as independent candidates.

Responding to media speculation over the growing rifts within the PA coalition, Batty Weerakoon, MP and LSSP's General Secretary, wrote to the Sunday press on June 1, playing down their statement made a week ago. "We are merely trying to put the PA government back on the correct path," asserted Mr. Weerakoon, who has emerged in recent years as the LSSP's main political strategist.

Meanwhile, the relations between the SLFP and the DUNLF have gone sour further resulted in the dropping of its leader, Mrs. Srimani Athulathmudali, from the cabinet. When a group of DUNLFers contested the Dehiwela-Mt. Lavinia Municipal Council as an independent group, Industries Minister CV Gunaratne called for the sacking of Srimani Athulathmudali from the cabinet. Gunaratne intensified his attack on the DUNLF making it more difficult for the DUNLF to continue its alliance with the other PA partners. Youth Affairs Minister S. B. Dissanayake has also joined the fray by saying that Athulathmudali should be sacked from the cabinet.

Some PA politicians express the view that the DUNLF has been behaving in

recent times like the UNP's Trojan Horse within the PA government. Senior PA politicians admit in private that Athulathmudali and Ravi Karunanayake of the DUNLF often give the impression of representing the UNP's strategic interests within the government.

Cooray - Ranil Battle Hots Up

The UNP, now in the opposition after seventeen years of political power and comfort, appears to be feeling very uncomfortable with its own self. The second coming of Sirisena Cooray to active politics after the UNP lost power in 1994, has created new ripples within the party, now led by the youthful, yet colourless leader, Ranil Wickremasinghe. During the past two years, Wickremasinghe has managed to marginalise Cooray, the accredited Premadasa loyalist of the UNP, who held the powerful position of UNP General Secretary when Premadasa was the President. After a few months' stay abroad, Cooray is now back in Colombo, providing headlines for news-hungry journalists.

Meanwhile, the internal differences within the UNP struck a high point when a private television station, TNL, aired a puppet show depicting Premadasa as living in hell and his alleged killer Babu as having found a place in heaven. Quite apart from the obviously bad taste of this program, the Premadasa family and Sirisena Cooray came out strongly against this political satire. Incidentally, the TNL is owned, managed and controlled by the family members of UNP leader Ranil Wickremasinghe. Cooray's strong denunciation of the satire and his attack on the TNL, are given wide publicity in the LANKA GUARDIAN which is the theoretical journal of the Premadasa loyalists of the UNP - a clear indication that the powerful Premadasa faction of the UNP is in a bitter and combative mood against the Wickremasinghe leadership of the UNP.

The Colombo media has for some time now speculated on the developing battle for control in the UNP. The Sirisena Cooray - Ranil Wickremasinghe battle for supremacy within the UNP is approaching an open show down as President Premadasa's birth anniversary (June 23) draws closer which the Cooray camp is determinant to commemorate on a grand scale signalling its readiness to demonstrate its strength. Some see this also as a sign that Wickremasinghe's position as the UNP leader may not go unchallenged any further. However, Cooray does not

seem to command much party support to take on Wickremasinghe in a battle for the UNP leadership.

The UNP is also facing another crisis, which seems to be totally unrecognised by the political whiz kids of both camps. This is a crisis of the social bases of the UNP's traditional constituencies in the rural areas.

Many members of the so-called depressed castes in Sinhala society, particularly in Kurunegala, Matale, Ratnapura, Hambantota, Galle and Matara districts, find the UNP no longer representing their interests. Recently, it has been noted, these rural voters are not interested at all in the leadership tussle among urban-based leaders like Ranil Wickremasinghe and Sirisena Cooray. "We don't have a Premadasa or a Cyril Mathew in the UNP any more," commented a disgruntled UNPer in a rural Hambantota village. When asked whether he would support the PA, this educated member of a depressed caste community retorted by saying that both the UNP and the PA were now dominated by two to three privileged castes.

Unitary State is Invalid

Sri Lanka's Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Prof. G.L. Pieris, has gone on record as saying that under the present circumstances it would be impossible for the new Constitution of Sri Lanka to hold fast to the idea of a unitary state. Prof. Pieris made this statement at a seminar organised by the Sri Lanka High Commission in London. He went on to say that the concept of the unitary state was in contradiction to the key component of the new Constitution, which was the devolution and de-centralisation of decision-making powers to the provinces.

Professor Pieris, the architect of the new draft constitution, for the first time made public his position on the relevance of the concept of a 'unitary state', at a point when the devolution of power to the regions remains the key issue in discussions on the new Constitution.

Sri Lanka's political elite continues to be divided on the issue of the nature of the future Sri Lankan state. The opponents of devolution, mainly Sinhala nationalist intellectuals, have been accusing the PA government and Professor Pieris of deviating from the unitary state model. The draft constitutional proposals envisage Sri Lanka to be 'an indissoluble union of regions', but this has been a contentious issue in discussions held by the Parliamentary Select Committee to formulate a resolution to the ethnic conflict.

No Sense of Humour

The TNL puppet show called ALWAYS BREAK-DOWN continues to entertain and irritate viewers on Friday evenings. A recent episode in which former

President Premadasa was portrayed as languishing in hell and his assassin Babu was somewhat of a 'good guy', has come in for a lot of criticism from the late President's supporters, including his daughter Ms. Dulanjalee Jayakody.

While those who find the programme offensive seem to think that one should not make fun of leaders, dead and alive, neither TNL nor the government has so far felt the need to curb the programme in any way. The programme contains characters who bear a startling resemblance to current political leaders, including President Kumaratunga and leader of the Opposition, Ranil Wickremasinghe. LTTE leader Prabhakaran and CWC leader Thondaman are also featured regularly, while the President's media advisor, Sanath Gunatilaka, comes on in cowboy attire singing popular romantic songs!

Industrial Unrest

Labour strife continues to haunt the government, with several unsettled strikes dragging on in the private and public sectors. There has been agitation for a change in management, by unions at Kelani Tyres and Pugoda

Textile Mills, both of which were previously state-owned enterprises that were privatised under current economic reforms. There are now signs that Pugoda may be taken over by the state, once more, in order to pre-empt further industrial action.

Meanwhile, over 400 workers at the Singer Company factory in Colombo have been on strike since May 20. They are represented by the Ceylon Mercantile Union. The CMU alleges that the management had violated the terms of the Collective Agreements signed between the Union and the Company, two years in a row. Workers claim that the Singer Company, which is the single biggest sponsor of the Sri Lankan cricket team, appears to have money to spare for cricket but none for the welfare of its own workforce.

Re-emergence of PRRA

The shadowy People's Revolutionary Red Army (PRRA) is once again in the news, with reports of a swoop on one of their hideouts by the Police on May 28. The news came as a surprise to many

quarters. PRRA has been virtually inactive since 1994, when the PA government came into power. While the Police say that some members of the PRRA, including its leader Silva, are wanted in connection with a series of killings in the 1987-1989 period, commentators point out that 'hunting' the PRRA has been politically expedient for different political leaders at different political moments in our recent history.

The close link between PRRA and the EPDP has also led to speculation that the moves against the PRRA are in fact aimed at intimidating the EPDP. The Police have even said they would consider raiding the EPDP's heavily fortified offices in Colombo to search for PRRA leaders. In a context in which the EPDP is continuing its agitation for an Interim Council in the North-East, while withholding its support for the government's devolution package, this may be read as a clear message from the authorities to the EPDP that it cannot expect its every move to be protected by the PA regime.

Lankan Woman to be Executed

Human rights workers in Lebanon have sent an appeal for help to their Sri Lankan colleagues on behalf of two Sri Lankan women presently in prison in Lebanon. One of them, Hewahakuru Leelawathie, is currently serving a ten year prison sentence, while the other one, Ehala Vahumpurage Lily Nona is being tried for the murder of another Sri Lankan woman. They have asked that Leelawathie be brought back to Sri Lanka to serve out the rest of her sentence here. In the case of Lily Nona, there are fears that she will be sentenced to death and executed in Lebanon. In her case, they have asked that clemency be applied and her sentence commuted to life imprisonment, since the death sentence is not carried out in Sri Lanka. As she stands accused of murdering another Sri Lankan, the appeal for clemency may have a chance if it receives enough support from the Sri Lankan authorities.

This appeal once again highlights the plight of Sri Lankan migrant workers who face trial or imprisonment abroad, especially in West Asian countries where Islamic laws apply. The Sri Lankan government has been remarkably lax in coming forward to defend the rights of its citizens in such situations. The tug-of-war that prevails between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour in this respect, has resulted in gross injustice to migrant workers, on whose remittances our economy depends.

Minister's Son Remanded: A Sri Lankan court on 28 May remanded the son of Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte in connection with the killing of a Papua New Guinean rugby coach outside a casino in the capital Colombo, court. Lohan Ratwatte was remanded in custody after he was identified by three prosecution witnesses at an identification parade as having been present at the scene when PNG coach Joel Pera was killed.

Pera was shot dead outside the casino on May 1 after an argument. The court also remanded four others in custody in connection with the killing of Pera, who was the coach at a local rugby club. All five are considered suspects in the case and were remanded in custody because the court has no power to grant bail without the advice of the Attorney-General in a murder case under Sri Lankan law. None of them has been charged.

Privately owned newspapers had earlier alleged that the police were dragging their feet in apprehending Logan Ratwatte because of interference by his father Anuruddha Ratwatte, who is also Minister for Power and Irrigation. Vehemently denying the allegation, the Minister told parliament that the police inquiry into Pera's killing would be independent and impartial and that he had not and would not interfere with the police investigation.

Elephants, Victims of War: Government soldiers have found three baby elephants orphaned in the jungles of war-torn northern Sri Lanka, apparent victims of the fighting, according to officials in Colombo.

The elephants, which were found over the past several weeks, are less than six months old, said Nandana Atapattu, a deputy director of the Wildlife Conservation Department. They have been taken to safety.

"This is very rare, especially during the rainy season. It is obviously because of the disturbance in the area," Atapattu said. Soldiers also found an elephant that died after stepping on a land mine in the war zone, Atapattu said. Electric wires also kill elephants in the area.

The Worldwide Fund for Nature estimates that between 2,500 to 3,000 elephants roam the jungles of Sri Lanka. But 40 per cent of them are in war-ravaged northern part of the island and wildlife officials can't reach them.

325 Lankan Soldiers Killed at Thandikulam: A statement issued by the LTTE on 12 June said that, despite Deputy Defence Minister Ratwatte's determined efforts to conceal military casualty figures the LTTE counted no less than 325 Sri Lankan soldiers dead after the Thandikulam battle. The entire Thandikulam camp was destroyed. The LTTE lost 80 LTTE fighters, 21 of whom are women.

Massage Pillow, a Security Threat: A battery-operated massage pillow belonging to an opposition Member of Parliament recently caused a scare in Sri Lanka's parliament after police seized it as a potential security threat. The pillow was discovered in the car of former Speaker M H Mohammed during a routine check at the entrance of the high-security parliament building in the Colombo suburb of Sri Jayewardenepura.

Mohammed told parliament he was not amused and said the police action amounted to harassment. Security is always tight at the parliament building, located on a small island in a lake, because of fears it may be attacked by the LTTE.

New Electoral System: The government of Sri Lanka on 5 June proposed converting the existing proportional representation (PR) election system into a hybrid of PR and first-past-the-post.

The proposed changes will lower the number of seats in

parliament to 198 from the present 225, reintroduce by-elections, do away with preference votes and also reintroduce multi-member constituencies in some areas.

The proposals were placed by Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister G L Peiris before a Parliamentary Select Committee debating constitutional reform and devolution of power. Peiris is chairman of the Select Committee made up of all parties in parliament. It has been meeting for more than a year.

Under the first-past-the-post system, each voter casts only one vote and the candidate receiving the most votes is declared the winner. Proportional representation is designed to give each party representation in an elected body as near as possible to their proportion of the vote it had obtained at an election.

Political analysts are of the view that the proposed new election system will ensure fairer representation, especially for minorities. The proposed election system and the power-sharing devolution plan will be included in the new constitution that the government has said will be placed before parliament within the next two months.

Deported Swiss Paedophile to be Prosecuted: A Swiss prosecutor investigating the activities of a suspected Swiss paedophile deported from Sri Lanka recently said he had gathered reliable evidence to prosecute the man back in Switzerland. Zurich district attorney Peter Pellegrini said 54-year-old Viktor Baumann would stand trial towards the end of this year. "We have questioned many people.... We have got reliable evidence and we will take all this with us back to Switzerland and process before using them in the trial," Pellegrini told a news conference held at Colombo's police headquarters. Sexual abuse carries a maximum sentence of seven years in Switzerland, Pellegrini said.

Baumann, a resident businessman of Sri Lanka for a long time, was arrested by Swiss authorities after Sri Lanka deported him last February. He was arrested last October by Sri Lankan police while in the company of several local children at his house near the coastal resort of Negombo, 24 miles (38 km) north of Colombo.

Sri Lanka has been co-operating with Swiss authorities in a bid to clamp down on child abusers operating in the country, widely believed to be a popular destination among the world's paedophile.

In February, a Sri Lankan court sentenced 58-year-old Swiss national Armin Heinrich Pfaffhauser to two years in jail for child sexual abuse. Pfaffhauser was the first foreigner to be convicted of the offence. He had pleaded not guilty.

In 1995, Sri Lanka passed tough new laws aimed at curbing paedophile activity. The new law calls for a minimum 10-year jail term and a maximum of 20 for pimps and their clients. It pushed the minimum age of consent up to 18 for consenting adults.

25 Killed in LTTE Attack: A LTTE statement on 13 May said that LTTE forces on penetrated Pankulam's army/police military complex - and its surrounding airforce fortifications - killing 20 Sri Lankan soldiers and 5 armed homeguards. The attack took place on 13 June night and caused all remaining Sri Lankan military personnel to flee from the fighting. During the attack, a Sri Lankan rescue bid failed dramatically, with LTTE forces successfully holding reinforcements at bay. Eight LTTE members lost their lives.

Tourism Picks Up: Sri Lanka's tourism industry is reported to be well on its way to recovery this year after a 25 percent drop in arrivals in 1996, according to officials in Colombo. They said the revival of the struggling industry is also reflected in a rise in



prices of hotel shares on the Colombo Stock Exchange in recent weeks. "There has obviously been a recovery in tourist arrivals in the winter season which continued till April," Ceylon Tourism Board chairman Sugathapala Samaranayake said.

Tourist arrivals in the first quarter of this year rose by 17 percent over the same period in 1996 to 101,760, he said. Tourist arrivals in March alone rose 29 percent to 34,098 from 26,442 in the same month last year. "We attribute the recovery to the improved security situation and the promotional work done by the government and the private sector," Samaranayake added.

Sri Lanka's earnings from tourism plunged to \$175 million in 1996 from \$225 million the previous year, reducing the island to a low-budget destination, after Tamil Tiger attacks in capital Colombo which included the blowing up of the island's Central Bank complex and petroleum depots.

"We are trying to get back to the 1995 figure," he said. "From there we have to build for the future and work for growth." Samaranayake said average hotel occupancy was around 50 percent during the season and that some hotels were almost full. "There is also a fair amount of patronage by locals, particularly during weekends and long holidays," he said.

Analysts said hotel and travel sector stocks were expected to rise in 1997, mostly due to the recent revival. "We believe the tourist sector has clearly bottomed out and the only way is up," brokerage Jardine Fleming said in a recent report. But it warned that although above-average growth can be expected from the hotel industry because of the revival, industry earnings will remain volatile. Sri Lankan stocks have already risen 12.1 percent this April 1997 on the back of political stability, lower corporate borrowing rates and expectations of better first quarter results.

Tea Output Reaches New Record: Sri Lanka's tea output last year established a new record of 258 million kilograms, which is an increase of 5 percent compared with the figures in 1995, according to recent figures from the Central Bank.

The Bank sources said that the increase was entirely from the low grown sector which recorded a substantial increase of 16.3 million kgs over its previous record whilst production from the high and medium grown sectors have declined marginally. At present, about 60 percent of tea production comes from the small holder sector which is a great achievement in the tea industry since 1980's.

The Sri Lankan government has taken several measures to increase productivity and profitability of tea. Sri Lanka has begun a process of modernising the tea industry with the infusion of new capital, new technology and improved management standards. The private sector with large plantations as well as the small holdings have played a dynamic and central role in this development effort, the sources pointed out.

Tea is one of Sri Lanka's main export items and the sources of 25 percent of its export earning. Total tea exports during last year recorded 244 million kgs bettering its previous record of 240 million kgs in 1995.

Army Pursuing Scorched Earth Policy: A statement by the LTTE on 20 May said that the Sri Lankan military, in its latest military offensive Sri Lanka was pursuing a scorched earth policy. The lush farmlands of Omanthai, Puliyankulam and Nedunkerni are no more. Armoured vehicles and tanks have been deliberately tearing up paddy lands and banana plantations with a view to making them un-cultivable. Not a single building or farmer's hut is left standing in these areas. They have either been torched or bombed out. The stench of dead cattle is every where. The troops have maliciously destroyed several million rupees worth

of Tamil civilian property.

Displacement is total in these areas. In Omanthai alone 3500 families have been driven away. No effort has been undertaken to house the refugees by any organisation so far. But 330 families have found accommodation in schools - in Puthukudiyiruppu Maha Vidyalayam 107, Mullaitivu Maha Vidyalayam 108, Ananthapuram Vidyalayam 56 and Manthuvil Vidyalayam 59. The rest are languishing in forests and roadsides. This can be visible to any person travelling in the area. The area is far away from the two main theatres of war Omanthai and Nedunkerni.

Furore over Ordination of Buddhist Women: The establishment of an order of Buddhist nuns (Bhikkunis) continues to create dissension within the Sinhala-Buddhist community. Conservatives are critical not only of the ordination of women, but of the fact that the ordination took place outside Sri Lanka. Some leading Buddhist women last year travelled to India to be ordained after years of being refused ordination by the Sri Lankan Buddhist clergy.

In response, other Buddhist spokespersons who are known for their conservative views on other issues are coming forward to defend the small community of nuns.

Speaking at a seminar held at the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress hall on April 20, Prof. Tandem Wijebandara said 'Men's desire to suppress women, which has remained throughout human history has now manifested itself in a religious fashion'. He called on Sri Lankan women not to give into the slogans of people who oppose the setting up of the Bhikkuni Sasana.

Food Supplies to War Zone: Amidst accusations by the LTTE that the Sri Lankan authorities are seeking to starve the Tamils living in the northern war zone by preventing the transport of food supplies, Sri Lankan aid officials said on 3 June that almost 11-thousand tons of food supplies would be shipped to the northern war zone for civilians displaced by heavy fighting between government troops and the Tamil Tigers.

An official of the United Nation's world food program in Colombo said trucks would deliver 11-thousand tons of food supplies to the rebel-dominated north during June. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) would provide escort for the trucks into the Vanni jungle region. The food would then be transferred to a quasi-government organisations called the Multi-Purpose Co-operative Societies (MPCSS) for distribution in the LTTE controlled areas of Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Vavuniya and Mannar.

International relief agencies confirmed that food stocks in the area had dwindled after government shipments to the northern region were disrupted by a major army offensive begun in May.

New Rules For Recruiting Sri Lankans: The Sri Lankan government is formulating rules and regulations under which overseas employers of Sri Lankan manpower will be obliged to stick to provisions of contracts, Foreign Employment Bureau sources said recently.

The prime objective of the legislation is to safeguard the interest of the overseas contract workers including those of domestic maids and also those of the foreign employers. The regulations will commit the overseas employer to the payment of salary at a specified level, provision of air tickets and other minimum facilities, the sources said.

Similarly, it will bind the recruiting agencies to supply qualified and trained manpower. The Employment Bureau has requested that foreign employers should not recruit Sri Lankan labour through middlemen as this increases the cost of manpower supply by passing on the additional financial burden to

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both the employer and the contract worker.

In the Middle East at the moment, the policy of the Sri Lankan government was to target for junior and senior management levels before they target jobs at the lower rungs, according to A M M Thasleem, director general of the Colombo-based Trans Gulf Agency.

In 1996, Sri Lanka earned a total of 107 million U.S. dollars by way of foreign exchange remittances from its overseas workers representing a 10 percent increase over the previous year.

Arab Fear Dilution of Culture by Foreign Maids: A United Arab Emirates official says foreign maids can be a "serious threat" to the cultural and religious grooming of children in their care.

Mohammed Eissa al-Suweidi said the 150,000 maids working in UAE households - mostly from Bangladesh, India, Philippines and Sri Lanka - tend to pass on their language and traditions to the children they look after. "This can greatly impede the children's assimilation of their own Arabic and Islamic culture," the country's Under Secretary for Labour and Social Affairs told the press recently.

He says many children grow up speaking a "strange mixture of Arabic and English, in addition to the maid's mother-tongue." Al-Suweidi blamed the presence of maids on UAE women, most of whom, he said, had "turned over their role as mothers to foreign nannies."

He said the Ministry's study had recommended new labour regulations to limit the number of domestic servants per household. The government, concerned about foreign influence diluting Arab culture and seeking to balance the country's demography, has established a special fund to help bridegrooms pay the often hefty dowries for UAE brides.

And fearing that the UAE could be left with a sizeable population of spinsters, the government is considering placing a ban on such marriages, similar to one in place in neighbouring Oman.

Lankan Ties With China: Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Laksman Kadirgamar said recently that his country was "proud of the quality of the special relations between Sri Lanka and China, because this kind of friendship is based on mutual respect."

Speaking at a special meeting to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries, the minister noted that Sri Lanka and China have enjoyed co-operative and cordial contacts for several millennia. Such contacts covered a wide spectrum of interaction in the political, economic, social, and cultural fields, he said.

He pointed out, "On February 7, 1997, we completed four decades of full relations. Yet, in terms of time, 40 years is a short period, considering the fact of the existence of state-to-state, government-to-government and people-to-people interaction ... for more than 2,000 years between the two countries."

No Smoking in Air Lanka: Air Lanka, Sri Lanka's national airline, will begin to operate fully no-smoking flights to and from Europe from July 1, according to Air Lanka sources. The airline's decision to go no-smoking is based on historical studies of passenger preferences on these routes.

By implementing the no-smoking rule, Air Lanka will be complying with the recommendations of the International Civil Aviation Organisation to operate fully no-smoking flights on international routes. Air Lanka, established in 1979, declared its flights to West Asia and Asia (with the exception of Japan) to be fully no-smoking last winter.

More Women for Police: Sri Lankan police are recruiting more women to the force, freeing the men to serve in the island's

war-ravaged north and east, according to police sources.

"Frankly, there are not enough men today," Senior Superintendent Lalith Gunasekera of the Police Training School told the press on 28 May. "More and more women, meanwhile, are willing to come forward and take on the responsibility of being a policewoman." The training school at Kalutara, 40 km (25 miles) south of the capital Colombo, had so far this year graduated 456 women, while another 535 are waiting in the wings to be inducted as

Sub-Inspectors and constables, he said. "This is the highest number of women to have been trained by us in one year in the history of the force," said a senior official attached to the police recruitment and training division.

"Part of the fallout from this development is that the police can now release more men to serve in the north and the east in a supportive role to the army," said the official. "We release policewomen also to serve in the north and the east and so far they have fared extremely well," Gunasekera said.

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World Bank to Help Lanka Fight Aids: The World Bank agreed to provide assistance to the tune of 1.45 million U.S. dollars to set up a central complex for the HIV Control Program in Sri Lanka. It will be one of the most modern complexes in the world with all modern and sophisticated equipment to treat patients with VD, HIV positive and AIDS symptoms, according to health sources in Colombo.

The building to house the laboratory and the treatment clinic will be constructed on the land opposite the premises of the present VD campaign office in Colombo.

The first positive Aids case in the country was reportedly confirmed in 1986. The victim was found to have been infected during his stay in London. The sources said there are 220 HIV-positive cases in the country at present and it is believed that more than 8,000 people are carriers of the AIDS virus.

British Food Aid: The United Kingdom has provided 320,000 U.S. dollars to Sri Lanka through the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) to support the cultivation of food and other field crops in the war-ravaged Jaffna peninsula.

Under the project, Jaffna farmers will be supplied with water pumps and sprayers as well as vegetable, pulse and sesame seeds to resume these crops' production this year. About 2,000 farmer families in the 12 Agrarian Service Centre divisions in the peninsula will be selected as beneficiaries under this project.

Aid officials said they were concerned about malnutrition among civilians displaced by the fighting.

Lanka's Inflation Drops: Sri Lanka's annual inflation has been dropping steadily in recent months, standing at 7.8 percent last month, according to the latest statistics from the Central Bank. The latest Colombo Consumers' Price Index published by the Department of Census and Statistics for the month of May 1997 showed that the country's inflation declined to 14.3 percent in March from 16.8 percent last December and fell again to 7.8 percent in May this year.

The Colombo Consumers' Price Index is generally considered as an indicator of inflationary trends or price increases in Sri Lanka. "These trends confirm the expectations that inflation is on a downward trend in Sri Lanka," the Bank said. It added that the government will continue to persist with its anti-inflationary policies with a view to stabilising the economy and promoting economic growth.

LTTE Kills 3 PLOTE Members:

A statement by the LTTE issued on 12 June said that LTTE forces successfully attacked Plot's headquarters in Batticaloa killing three PLOTE cadres.

FOCUS

ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Case of Rape and Murder

Amnesty International in a statement dated 21 May said that Murugesupillai Koneswary, aged 35 and a mother of four children, was killed at her home in 11th Colony village in the eastern Batticaloa in Sri Lanka by a grenade being thrown at her genitals on the evening of 17 May. Reportedly only her two-year-old child was present when the attackers entered her house, but her husband and three older children were not at home at that time.

Circumstantial evidence suggests that she may have been raped prior to being killed and that the perpetrators may have been one or more police officers attached to the nearby Central Camp police station, on the border between Batticaloa and Amparai districts. Neighbours say they heard screams from the house, and shortly afterwards they heard an explosion. When they tried to go to Murugesupillai Koneswary's home, they heard shooting and rushed back indoors so they did not actually see the perpetrators. However, because this area is under the control of the police, observers claim that it is unlikely that there could have been any other people with arms in the area at that time.

Local people believe that the perpetrators may have thrown the hand grenade near her genitals in order to cover up the evidence of rape. The husband of Murugesupillai Koneswary, who discovered her body, made a complaint at Central Camp police station. Some police officers then took her body to the hospital at Kalmunai. However, no medical examination was carried out. It is not clear why no examination took place. Some reports suggest that the police, who also advised the relatives to dispose of the body, may have pressurised the hospital authorities.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned at the reports of the killing and possible rape of Murugesupillai Koneswary at 11th Colony, Batticaloa district, on 17 May 1997, and at reports that the perpetrators are believed to be police officers. Amnesty International urges the Sri

Lankan government to hold an independent investigation and to bring the alleged perpetrators to justice. Protection should be provided to witnesses to ensure that the alleged perpetrators cannot put pressure on them to influence the outcome of the investigation and the legal process. Adequate compensation should also be provided to the husband and children of Murugesupillai Koneswary.

Amnesty International noted that in September 1996, the rape and death of an 18-year-old student who "disappeared" after she was stopped at a sentry point at Kaithady, Jaffna district, created widespread public protest in Sri Lanka. Her mother, brother and neighbour had gone missing on the same day after they made inquiries at the sentry point. Their bodies were found approximately 6 weeks later. Post-mortem investigations found evidence of rape on the girl's body. Amid public outcry, eleven members of the security forces were arrested in connection with this case and legal action against them is pending.

However, in less prominent cases reported from other parts of the north and east, such as several cases reported from Batticaloa district in early 1997, initial investigations have not resulted in any effective legal action against the alleged perpetrators. In those exceptional cases where perpetrators have been brought to trial, victims of rape have failed to appear in court because of fear for their lives, Amnesty International said.

In the meantime, President Chandrika Kumaratunga ordered an inquiry into the alleged rape and killing of Koneswary by the police and a special team of detectives from the Criminal Investigation Department had already been despatched to the east, official sources said on 7 June.

The President's directive followed representations made by Joseph Pararajasingham, a TULF Member of Parliament for Batticaloa, who complained to the President that the woman had not been killed in the shoot-out as made out by police, but had been raped and murdered.

In a further statement dated 13 June reacting to the direction by the President ordering an inquiry, Amnesty International noted that the inquiry has been entrusted to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), a specialist unit of the police. A team is said to have gone to the area from Colombo to carry out the investigations.

Amnesty International is concerned that the local police may threaten the neighbours and other witnesses not to give evidence to the CID or pressurise them to give evidence that would substantiate the police's version of events. According to one source, local police are now claiming that Murugesupillai Koneswary was killed by a shell, not a grenade.

However, there is no damage to the house, apart from the crater inside the room.

There is also concern that the CID may not be seen to be impartial as they are part of the police, and that witnesses may be reluctant to come forward as a result.

Amnesty International has obtained further information about the possible circumstances leading up to the killing of Murugesupillai Koneswary. Apparently, she had been harassed by officers of the Central Camp police station since March 1997. Around that time, police officers had stolen timber which Murugesupillai Koneswary had bought to build a more permanent home than the small hut in which she had been living. She had made a complaint to the Officer-in-Charge of the police station, after which the timber had been returned. On the actual day of her killing, she had a verbal altercation with police officers at a checkpoint. Witnesses reported that she had spoken back when they had used offensive language with her.

The alleged perpetrators of the killing and rape reportedly had put the youngest child, who was with Murugesupillai Koneswary on the night of 17 May, outside the house. The child had wandered into a neighbour's house around 11.30pm. Just around that time, the explosion was heard.

It has been confirmed that a post mortem was carried out at Kalmunai hospital, but the results are unknown. Amnesty International urges the Sri Lankan government to provide protection to the witnesses in this case to ensure that the alleged perpetrators cannot put pressure on them to influence the outcome of the inquiry and any legal process that may follow from it. Adequate compensation should also be provided to Murugesupillai Koneswary's family, Amnesty International added.

Two Women Raped

In another statement dated 21 May 1997, Amnesty International said that on 22 March, four soldiers from the Mayilampavali army camp were taken into custody on suspicion of being responsible for the reported rape of Velan Rasamma, aged 34, and her sister, Velan Vasantha, aged 28, on 17 March 1997. The soldiers were initially remanded by the Batticaloa magistrate. On 28 March, an identification parade was held but the two women reportedly failed to identify the soldiers responsible for raping them. However, their mother was able to identify one of the soldiers.

The captain in charge of Mayilampavali army camp was transferred out

of the area shortly after the incident, apparently as a disciplinary measure. Although the preliminary judicial inquiry is proceeding, it is unsure whether the prosecution will be successful. The four soldiers have been released on bail.

Amnesty International has received reliable reports that Velan Vasantha attempted to commit suicide by swallowing poison. She had reportedly left a note explaining to her prospective husband that she was unable to continue to live after what happened to her. The suicide attempt was unsuccessful.

Amnesty International welcomes the initial action taken against the suspected perpetrators of the reported rape of Velan Rasamma and Velan Vasantha on 17 March 1997. Amnesty International urges the Sri Lankan government to provide protection to the women to allow them to give evidence without fear of intimidation.

Kumarapuram Massacre - Court Hearing Resumes

A witness labourer from told a court on 4 June how he saw bullets rake the thatched walls of his house as government soldiers stood outside firing, court Krishnan Palanivel, 30, whose father was among 25 people killed in a massacre of Tamil villagers in eastern Sri Lanka last year, was giving evidence against eight soldiers charged with the atrocity.

Women and children were among the dead in the attack on the village of Kumarapuram, 30 km (19 miles) from the eastern port town of Trincomalee, on February 11, 1996.

The soldiers have also been charged with the attempted murder of 26 civilians wounded in the attack. Seven witnesses, out of a total of 120, gave evidence when the hearing resumed on 4 June at the Magistrate's court in eastern Muttur.

Palanivel told court how, upon returning home from work that evening, he saw two persons in army uniform standing outside his house and firing. Bullets smashed the walls, which were made from coconut thatch, he said. Palanivel said he later found the bullet-riddled body of his father inside. He identified two suspects as the people who had fired at his house.

A 27-year-old mother of three, Pakyarasa Purnam, told the court that she hid inside a shop with her children and husband after hearing gunfire. Two men dressed in army uniforms came to the shop and began shooting. Her husband was killed, but she managed to run away from the back door with the children, she said. She could not identify any of the suspects.

TIGERS STRIKE BACK IN "DO OR DIE" BATTLE

By D B S Jeyaraj

State Minister of Defence Anuruddha Ratwatte was in a buoyant mood when he addressed a press conference on Friday 6 June. Expressing confidence not seen since the beginning of this round of the conflict dubbed the Eelam War, three Ratwatte scoffed at the LTTE's efforts at defending the Vanni against the advancing army. Striking a strident note he described the LTTE as "Terrorists whom I now call jackals and not tigers any more."

Ratwatte's exhibition of brazen cockiness was easy to understand. Operation Jaya Sikurui meaning "certain victory" or "Victory assured" was progressing successfully as far as the acquisition of real estate was concerned. The preliminary phase began on 13 May. Under the supervision of overall operation commander for the north-east Major General Asoka Jayewardene two divisions comprising 23,000 soldiers were involved.

In the first phase the newly created 55th Division had captured Omanthai, 10 miles to the north of Vavuniya Town along the A-9 trunk road or the Jaffna-Kandy highway. Omanthai could be described as the gateway to the Tiger-controlled territory of the northern mainland. The 55th was commanded by Brigadier Sunil Kottegoda while Brigadier Nihal Marambe was the second in command. The main thrust of these troops was from Thandikulam with two ancillary movements from Poovarasankulam and Mahamadhu. The ancillary movements were sideshows intended to divert LTTE attention. The main line of advance met with stiff LTTE resistance at places such as Manicka Valavu, Kovil Kulam, Panicka Neeraaviadi, and Pandrikku Eitha Kulam. In Omanthai there were fierce altercations at the premises of a church and a housing scheme. They set up camp in the Omanthai Maha Vidya-

layam School and a row of shop buildings.

After a period of a brief lull the same 55th division continued northwards in an arc-like movement. At the time of Ratwatte's press conference these troops had captured Rambai Kulam, Vilakku Vaitha Kulam and Periyamadu. They were within three miles to the south-west of Puliyankulam, 22 miles to the north of Vavuniya. Puliyankulam was the target destination of the 55th division in the second phase of Jayasikurui.

Likewise the 53rd division led by Brigadier Vasantha Perera had broken out of the Wel-Oya base complex on 13 May and had proceeded through tracts of jungle. This division had earlier been involved in Operation Riviresa and had effected the entry into Jaffna Town. The second in command was Brigadier Nanda Malla-waaratchi. The 53rd progressed along the axis of an old sand track cutting through jungles and villages and reached Nedukerny 25 miles to the north-east of Vavuniya Town. Initially the LTTE did not oppose this line of advance vehemently as it apparently misjudged it to be another diversionary tactic.

The 53rd division moved forward in two columns through rural villages such as Oonchakkatti, Vedaichakallu, Maruthodai, Pattikkudiyi Rupp, Othiyamalai, Senaipilavu and Perunkulam. There was heavy fighting in Pattikkudiyiruppu with the Tigers. After reaching Nedukerny the troops set up camp in the Nedukerny Madhya Maha Vidyalayam College. They also converted the entire Pattikkudiyiruppu-Othiyamalai villages into a base complex. More importantly linkage by road was established with the Wel-Oya base complex 11 miles to the south-east of Nedukerny. If Omanthai is the gateway, Nedukerny, situated in the interface of the Vavuniya and Mullaitheevu districts was the nerve centre of the Tiger heartland or "Ithaya bhoomi" of the Vanni.

After consolidating, Nedukerny troops in the second phase of Jayasikurui, moved eastwards towards Mullaitheevu Town securing villages such as Marichukkatti, Palampaasi, Velankulam, Maaraalluppai, Thannimurippukulam, Samma-

The rampage at Kumarapuram by the soldiers was apparently retaliation to two soldiers being killed by the Tamil Tigers on the same day. The government ordered an inquiry into the massacre after complaints by human rights organisations and Tamil members of parliament.

rasankulam and Kaathallyaar Samarasan Kulam. They are now at a point between Thanduvaan and Oddisuddan, a key town in the Vanni. Oddisuddan is only seven miles from Mullaitheevu Town.

Incidentally one aspect of the ongoing military manoeuvre is that the media spotlight is mainly on the troops moving northwards on the Jaffna-Kandy road axis. The focus is on the establishment of a ground link between the Jaffna peninsula and Vavuniya. What is not being reported fully is the significant, and from an LTTE perspective, the more dangerous military advances in the Mullaitheevu district.

The first week of June also saw heavy aerial bombardment and artillery shelling of places to the north of Mankulam and the South of Kilinochi. This suggested that troops from Kilinochi were also preparing to move southwards to Kokkavil where in 1990 an army camp was totally demolished by the LTTE. If troops moved down from Kilinochi too that meant the opening of a third front thereby increasing the pressure on the LTTE.

Thus at the time of Ratwatte's press conference the army was poised to take Puliyantheevu and Oddisuddan in a matter of days. Troops were also in preparedness to move from Kilinochi to Kokkavil. The second phase of the operation Jayasikurui was to be concluded after the achievement of these objectives. In that context General Ratwatte's cup of joy was overflowing. It was in that euphoric frame of mind that Ratwatte derisively dismissed the LTTE on 6 June. Three days later after midnight of Monday the 9th the "Tiger jackals" demonstrated that Ratwatte had grossly underestimated the capability and capacity of the LTTE.

Ratwatte's derogatory description of the Tigers as jackals was another indicator that the powers that be in Colombo had still not understood the ramifications of the armed struggle waged by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam for the past 21 years. The deputy defence minister's choice of the word jackal was perhaps because that animal usually backs out of a fight with an animal or animals that are stronger than it. In that sense the simile was because in Ratwatte's eyes the LTTE too was not engaging the army in direct combat but retreating and attacking behind cover.

What Mr Ratwatte has failed to grasp is that while the LTTE possesses some attributes of a conventional army it is only a guerrilla organisation in essence. A guerrilla organisation however powerful it may be is no match for a regular army when it comes to positional warfare. The conventional army with all the resources of a state at its disposal has a clear advantage over the guerrilla outfit particu-

larly in terms of firepower and numbers. As such in certain situations the guerrillas adopt neither offensive or defensive but evasive tactics.

History is replete with instances of guerrilla organisations who over-reached themselves and fought state armies in direct combat. These resulted in the guerrillas being decimated, destroyed or drastically weakened. It is to the credit of LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran that except on certain occasions necessitated by other priorities the Tigers have on the whole not engaged in positional warfare unnecessarily.

One example is that of Operation Rivi-resa in the Jaffna peninsula in 1995-96. The LTTE resisted the advancing army fiercely during Phase One from 1 October to 5 December where the greater part of Valigaamam and Jaffna Town were captured. The progress of the army was delayed to buy time so that the LTTE could relocate its cadres, military assets and a large proportion of the civilian population to the Vanni. In striking contrast to Rivi-resa Phase One the Tigers did not proffer stiff resistance to the army when phases two and three of Operation Rivi-resa were concluded in the Thenmaratchi and Vadamaratchi divisions respectively. Thus the LTTE despite having to cede territorial control in the Jaffna peninsula still remains a powerful guerrilla force because the greater part of its fighting potential was not destroyed in positional warfare with the army.

The guerrilla principle of evasive tactics could be summed up by the doggerel "He who fights and runs away, will live to fight another day". Ratwatte like many of his generals does not seem to have grasped this point if his statements at the press conference are to be taken serious note of. So when he compared the Tigers to jackals not only was he expressing bombastic overconfidence but was also displaying a perceptible lack of the fundamentals of guerrilla warfare. Sun Tzu the ancient Chinese expert on warfare says the basic lesson is "know thy enemy". Ratwatte's grandiloquent statement suggested that he had still not understood the mind set of his principal adversary Prabhakaran.

Interestingly when Deputy Defence Minister Ratwatte called the LTTE jackal he also seemed to have forgotten that the jackal is an animal endowed with intelligence and cunning. Folklore as well as natural science support this view of the jackal. The crafty "LTTE Jackal" in this case bided its time and struck back decisively. Every jackal has its day. Unlike Frederick Forsythe's "jackal" which had only a "day", Ratwatte's "Tiger jackals" had nights and days in this encounter.

Thandikulam is about three miles

north of Vavuniya Town. Further to the north is Nochimottai. Until the beginning of "Operation

Jayasikurui "Thandikulam was the northernmost point of army controlled areas from Vavuniya along the Jaffna-Kandy road. The LTTE sphere of control began from Nochimottai north of the village, adjacent to Thandikulam. The Army checkpoint and PLOTE posts were at the Thandikulam-Nochimottai border. Nochimottai south was something of a no man's land, The LTTE positions began at Nochimottai north.

Thandikulam being on the border of Tiger territory was quite vulnerable to LTTE attacks earlier. Both the army as well as the PLOTE which assisted the forces were ever vigilant. After the Army's successful advance to Omanthai the LTTE line of control got further pushed up. This relieved the pressure on Thandikulam. Security measures in the area became slightly relaxed.

Since the main action was occurring in areas north of Omanthai and also because the beleaguered LTTE was expected to remain defensive the personnel stationed at Thandikulam did not expect a major attack from the Tigers. Indeed the atmosphere in Thandikulam was something akin to Vavuniya Town itself without the forces fearing an imminent attack. Still the field headquarters of the 55th Division, ammunition dumps and long range artillery positions etc were in the Thandikulam area.

The LTTE targeted Thandikulam for these reasons. It was classic guerrilla strategy where the hunted quarry doubles back across enemy lines, breaches defences and strikes unexpectedly at the off-guard rear. Information obtained from a cross section of orthodox and unorthodox sources provides a picture of what transpired.

According to LTTE sources the operation was codenamed "SEI ALLATHU SETHU MADI" meaning "DO OR DIE" It was masterminded by LTTE supremo Prabhakaran. The operation was implemented at field level under the supervision of Karuna or Karuna Amman. Karuna is the special commander (Viseda Thalpathi) of the Batticaloa and Amparai districts. Trincomalee is under Sornam, the Commander of the elite Charles Anthony Brigade. Balarajah, the overall Deputy-Military Commander of the LTTE is in charge of the Vanni regional defences at present.

Karuna himself had been summoned by Prabhakaran to the Vanni prior to the commencement of Jayasikurui. Apparently Prabhakaran was displeased over certain aspects of the LTTE attack on Vavunatheevu and Valairavu. Although it was a success the LTTE leader expected a su-



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perative performance from his men and it was in connection with that incident that Karuna came to the Vanni. Once war broke Out heavily in the Vanni, Karuna, an experienced leader was assigned a new task along with Newton, a very senior leader of the LTTE. Newton is supposedly the foremost explosives expert in the LTTE. He is now in charge of training new recruits. Operation "Do or Die" was to be executed without hindrance to the crucial defensive measures being enacted in the Vanni.

Karuna and Newton cobbled together an assault force from diverse resources. Cadres from the Jeyanthan Infantry Brigade of the east were summoned hastily. They travelled from the east by both land and sea. Some of these cadres while travelling by sea came in for heavy attack off the coast of Kokkilai in the Mullaitheevu District. Likewise some cadres travelling by land were accosted by troops near the Habarana jungles. Apart from the eastern cadres of the Jeyanthan Brigade, a fresh batch of new recruits recently trained by Newton was also involved. Others were from the Women Corps' Black Tiger Suicide Squad and members of the "Cheeta" (Vengai) Commando Unit. Around 1,000 to 1,500 cadres were assembled for the "Do or Die" operation.

LTTE cadres crossed westwards off the Jaffna-Kandy Road and converged clandestinely in Periyathambanai, Iranai Iluppai Kulam and Palamottai by Monday 9 June. These places are to the west, north-west and north of Thandikulam respectively. Tracts of jungle, villages and fields lie in between. At nightfall on Monday the Tigers hurried through jungle tracks and footpaths to the vicinity of Thandikulam. The assault commenced around 2.00 am in the early hours of Tuesday morning.

Near simultaneous attacks were launched. Two Tiger groups used Marukarampalai and Pathiniyaar Mahilankulam as launching pads for their attacks on the forward defence lines of Samayapuram and Ganesha Puram. These along with Sivapuram and Manipuram are colony schemes adjoining Thandikulam. It is assumed that a few black Tigers blew themselves up to gain the advantage of surprise. The Tigers quickly ran through Samayapuram and Ganeshapuram to mount an attack on the headquarters and cantonment at Thandikulam.

Two other groups also attacked Thandikulam. One group penetrated and moved through Kokuveli and proceeded southwards to Thandikulam. The other infiltrated the secured area of Navatkulam between Vavuniya Town and Thandikulam. This contingent moved northwards via the farm school and attacked Thandikulam military positions. Thus Thandikulam was

attacked from four directions namely north, north-west, south-west and south.

The main assault on Thandikulam was supplemented by two co-ordinated attacks on the Forward Defence Lines and PLOTE positions at Nochimottai. One group moved north-east from Peyaadi-koolankulam while the other moved south-east from Shanthasolai. There is a bridge at Nochimottai over a tributary stream flowing into the "Parangi Aaru" river. This bridge known as the "Nochimottai Paalam" was blown up by the LTTE too.

The LTTE also set up what are known as cut out points. These are fixed positions of a temporary nature located at strategic key points. The purpose is to prevent reinforcements reaching the beleaguered enemy while the operation is in progress. These cut outs were set up in Nochimottai in the north and Navatkulam in the south of Thandikulam. No effective reinforcements were sent, however, while the Tigers were in control of Thandikulam.

The LTTE also used another tactic in the operation which is perhaps the first of its kind for a guerrilla force in this region. Unlike in earlier attacks on places like Pooneryn, Mullaitheevu or Paranthan the LTTE used long range artillery this time. Three artillery positions were set up in Shastrykoolankulam, Veppankulam and Kalmadu

130mm, 122mm and 85mm long range artillery seized from the security forces at Mullaitheevu, Paranthan and Pulukawanaw were used here. Initially these were used to attack artillery positions in Thandikulam, Nochimottai and also to prevent reinforcements by land and air coming from Vavuniya. The Airport as well as military installations were under attack. This artillery barrage was enhanced later when artillery commandeered at Thandikulam and Nochimottai was also used. More than 250 shells were fired by the LTTE. About 40 landed in the Vavuniya Town area itself.

The LTTE overran Thandikulam by 6.00 am on the morning of Tuesday the 10th. They remained in full control of Thandikulam until the evening of Wednesday 11th and began withdrawing only on Thursday. The security forces were able to re-enter Thandikulam only by Thursday evening and were able to take over fully on Friday. The government used its aerial resources intensely by bombarding Thandikulam and nearby areas intermittently. Israeli K-Firs, Argentinean Puccaras and Russian-built Mi24 helicopter gunships were used for the purpose. Artillery fire was also maintained from Vavuniya and Eerateriyakulam camps.

The LTTE destroyed an ammunition dump and an arms depot. It also took away a sizable number of arms, artillery,

ammunitions and vehicles. An artillery point with three 25 pounder guns was found destroyed with 20 corpses of the Gunner Unit lying nearby. The government claims that the gunners after putting up a last ditch stand destroyed the guns themselves. The field headquarters, messes and barracks etc were also demolished by the Tigers in the 48 to 72 hour period they dominated Thandikulam.

There are conflicting versions about casualties and losses too. The Tigers claim that nearly 300 soldiers were killed by them in operation "Do or Die". They do not give the figures of the injured or of any one being taken prisoner. The Tigers also claim that five tanks and a helicopter have been destroyed by them. Concerning their losses the LTTE says that they lost 81 including 21 girls. They do not give figures of injured cadres. An unconfirmed report states that Newton was among three senior leaders killed in the fighting.

The Sri Lankan Defence Ministry claims are different. At the time of this article being written the official figures are 97 soldiers and 9 officers killed and 86 soldiers and 12 officers wounded. The government also says that an undisclosed amount of persons are reported "missing" still. The government also claims that 210 Tigers including 70 women cadres have been killed although only 48 bodies have been recovered by the forces. Another 300 Tigers are wounded. Refuting LTTE claims the government says that a Czech-built T-55 tank was destroyed and two damaged while a Mi24 helicopter incurred minor damage.

Some policemen at Kokuveli and a few PLOTE cadres have also been killed. In addition there are considerable civilian casualties too. Preliminary reports state that 19 civilians were killed and 32 seriously injured. A further 80 sustained minor injuries. When the LTTE cadres first entered villages adjoining Thandikulam prior to the commencement of the attack the Tigers asked the people to run away. Some people ran in the direction of Thandikulam and got caught in the crossfire. Later the LTTE artillery barrage along with the army shelling and airforce bombing also caused civilian casualties.

More than 7,000 civilians including 600 Muslims have been temporarily displaced as a result of this attack. They have been lodged in four refugee camps including one in a Muslim "Madrasa" or religious school. Some Muslims from Pattanichoor have gone to Medawachiya. Other Tamils and Muslims have also taken refuge with relatives and friends in Vavuniya.

At least 18 soldiers have fled from the combat zone along with the escaping civilians. Since there was a cordial relationship prevailing between soldiers and ci-

villians many people had helped the soldiers. Four soldiers had even borrowed verties from the people and worn them. The soldiers and civilians had fled through circuitous routes incorporating shrub jungle, paddy fields, lake bunds, sandy bylanes and gravel tracks etc to reach Vavuniya safely.

At one point of time there had been panic in Vavuniya over a rumour that the LTTE was about to invade Vavuniya. This rumour was reinforced by the artillery barrage of the Tigers. It was supposed that the barrage was a precursor to the LTTE invasion of Vavuniya on foot. Warnings given to fleeing civilians had also fuelled this rumour. Unable to disregard the rumour the security authorities had also taken up defensive positions first. Vavuniya itself became virtually a ghost town for some time. Normalcy returned as with the passage of time the rumours were dispelled.

Vavuniya residents said that their fear of a Tiger take-over diminished only when they saw a cavalcade of tanks and armoured cars preceding 8 columns of soldiers proceeding towards Thandikulam. These were reinforcements from Medawachiya, Chettikulam and Eeraperiya Kulam. Vavuniya residents said that they were standing on either side of the streets and watched the armoured vehicles proceeding. Although no one cheered the mood was generally appreciative as Vavuniya people enjoying normalcy and relative prosperity did not want their lives disrupted as a result of LTTE activity.

Despite the rumour it was quite clear that the LTTE would not try to capture Vavuniya as it would be impossible to hold on to it. Even holding onto Thandikulam too is not possible mainly because of its geographical location. What was feared, however, was the LTTE temporarily invading Vavuniya, destroying strategic buildings and perhaps looting businesses. The LTTE considers the PLOTE dominated Vavuniya as a hostile people using the artillery at its disposal indiscriminately against Vavuniya itself is indicative of this.

When operation Jayasikurui began its objectives were fourfold. The first was to establish control of the Jaffna-Kandy Road; the second was to enlarge the area of the Wel-Oya Region. The third was to capture as much of LTTE territory in the Vanni as possible. The fourth was to push back the LTTE lines further up away from Nochimottai so as to prevent LTTE artillery attacking the Vavuniya airport effectively. Through operation Sei Allathu Sethu Madi the Tigers have demonstrated that Vavuniya is by no means invulnerable. For a brief period the entire town of Vavuniya was in jeopardy.

Similarly the fate of the front-line soldiers at Omanthai and Periyamadu was also a question mark for a while. The capture of Thandikulam saw the interdiction of this vanguard and rearbase temporarily. Moreover the field headquarters itself was annihilated throwing the operation into disarray. The symbolic, militaristic and psychological impact of the assault on Thandikulam is of profound significance.

The Tigers have demonstrated through action that the advancing army columns are not monolithically impregnable. They have shown that as troops advance further and further their points of fallibility and vincibility also increase. The Tigers have shown that they have the capacity and capability to mount an operation of this magnitude without alerting army intelligence even now. They have shown that they possess great mobility as well as ability to hit the enemy hard.

The attack has also made the government painfully aware that while advancing may be relatively easy, retaining the area captured will not be that easy. As the troops expand their area of control manpower will continue to thin out thereby increasing vulnerability. Given the politico-military objective of this government one cannot see the Jayasikurui Operation being abandoned as a result of Thandikulam. But the pace of Jayasikurui may slow down further.

Thandikulam and Nochimottai are in the process of being cleared and consolidated. The bulk of the Tiger cadres after dominating Thandikulam and its environs for two nights and days are now withdrawing through the jungles of Madhu. The forces are cautiously re-establishing their authority in the area. General Ratwatte has visited the affected area in a bid to boost morale of the soldiers.

General Ratwatte has also said that the LTTE has attacked the tail instead of the head which is making swift strides into LTTE terrain. Even the government tail is more powerful than the LTTE head, says Mr Ratwatte. It is pertinent to point out that Thandikulam in this case was not the tail but the back. What went wrong here was the complacency over the safety of the rear. The fault here was that of not "protecting the posterior" or not "watching your ass" or not "guarding your back" depending of course on the terminology one intends to use.

Overestimating one's own strength and underestimating the enemy have been the twin mistakes of many a strategist. Ratwatte's description of the Tigers as jackals is illustrative of this. Besides it also shows that he has not grasped the fundamental nature of the conflict Sri Lanka is embroiled in. If such cocksure complacency continues then the government is quite likely to face some more

setbacks in the future. At the same time LTTE propagandists must also realise that despite its effectiveness a solitary "Thandikulam" success by itself cannot reverse the military course of action being pursued by the present government.

Latest reports as of 15 June indicate that the casualty toll among the security forces in the Tiger attack at Thandikulam number 535. This comprises 180 killed, 328 wounded, and 27 reported missing. There were seven naval casualties among the casualties. All missing persons are presumed to have been killed with the exception of few high ranking officers taken prisoner by the LTTE. More than a hundred troops escaped death by fleeing along with Tamil civilians to Vavuniya town.

Among the wounded, 94 have been classified as less severely injured (P2) and remaining 129 in all are described as "walking wounded" (P3).

The LTTE artillery barrage has also caused considerable damage to the sprawling military complex base known as the Joseph base in Vavuniya town. The Vavuniya airforce base also incurred damage in the attack.

Reports also state that the government was compelled to re-deploy troops from the front-lines of Omanthai and Nedunkerny to counter the LTTE at Thandikulam. Personnel belonging to the 55th division from Omanthai led by Brig. Sunil Kottegoda had to retrace their steps and moved backwards to reach Nochimottai north on foot. Commandos and special airborne brigade troops from Nedunkerny were airlifted back to Vavuniya for the counter-offensive at Thandikulam. Reports add that the 55th division headquarters and cantonment at Thandikulam have been totally demolished. Defence ministry sources have also admitted that Thandikulam base and its contiguous forward defence line outposts have been totally overwhelmed. Logistical requirements have necessitated the partial withdrawal of personnel from both the Puliyanakulam-Omanthai as well as the Nedunkerny-Odisuddan fronts. As such the progress of Operation Jaya Sikurui seems to have been temporarily halted. □

*Not tho' the soldiers know
Some one had blunder'd
Their's not to make reply
Their's not to reason why
Their's but to do and die
Into the Valley of Death
Rode the six hundred
Cannon to the right of them
Cannon to the left of them
Valley'd and thunder'd
- Alfred Lord Tennyson*

DEMOCRACY AND DEVOLUTION IN BRITAIN: LESSONS FOR SRI LANKA

By Dr.S.Narapalasingam

The peaceful and dignified way ruling power passed on to the Labour Party from the Tories following the recent general election in Britain has aroused interest in the successful working of democracy in this multi-ethnic country. It may be recalled that universal suffrage came to Britain only in 1918 and to Ceylon, its then colony, not long after in 1931. While democracy in Britain has kept the country united, in Sri Lanka it has divided the people bitterly, resulting in the present bloody conflict. Even among the majority Sinhalese, there are many who are disappointed with the way it has functioned in Sri Lanka.

The decorum seen in the ways all parties in Britain conducted their election campaigns must have envied the informed Sri Lankans. There were no violent incidents and no one was physically hurt. There were no harassment, intimidation, thugery, abduction and arson throughout the six-weeks long campaign as well as on election day. Nor was there any post-election violence. People celebrated Labour party's landslide victory in very civilised manner. The two main opposition parties, Labour and Liberal Democrats, focused on matters relating to policy and competence to

govern. The failures of the Conservative government and the policy and the changes that their parties would introduce to tackle the various problems for the immediate and long-term benefit of the people and the country were spelt out. The division within the ruling Tory party and the ways it handled the domestic problems as well as those arising from Britain's membership in the European Union were also highlighted.

The Conservative Party with its low rating in the opinion polls highlighted the positive trends in the economy. The economic indicators which showed low interest rates, low inflation, falling unemployment and higher growth rates compared with other EU countries were cited to prove its achievements. Prime Minister, John Major's determination and good humour during the campaign trail won him many admirers, despite his party's unpopularity.

Political advertisements were seen only on billboards and not on the walls, lamp posts and every other available space along public roads as in Sri Lanka.

All registered parties were given time equitably by the broadcasting companies, including the BBC for their party broadcasts. Here too the emphasis was mainly on policy issues and ways to tackle effectively the local and national problems. There were no racist overtones in their election propaganda. Labour's strategy of issuing cards containing its election pledges, called the ten point contract with the British people was unique. At the top of this card was the statement, "Keep this card and see we keep our promises." Tony Blair kept on stressing throughout the campaign, "What I promise, I will deliver. Hold me to it."

Media and the Judiciary

The British media play an important role in ensuring morality in politics and democratic freedom. The print and electronic media have the freedom to criticise the governments and expose any wrongdoing by persons in authority, regardless of their positions in government. The independence of the British judicial system is beyond reproach. Recently, the previous rulings of judges in some cases relating to IRA bombings were quashed by the appeal court as the evidences used to convict the suspects were later discovered to be unsound. Even some rulings of the Home Secretary, the highest official in the government responsible for law and order have been overturned by the courts.

The political debates and the opinions expressed freely by the public on political parties and matters of public concern in the radio and television programmes on current affairs bear testimony to the impartial way the electronic media function in Britain. The BBC is funded by the government and has been established under a Royal Charter. It too allows opposition parties to convey their views to the public. Moreover in news and other programmes, the Cabinet Ministers are

grilled fearlessly by the interviewers. The Broadcasting Act 1990 (which covers the independent sector) insists on impartiality in political coverage.

The need to have independent regulatory bodies in Britain originates solely from the standpoint of public interest. The Independent Broadcasting Authority, Monopolies and Mergers Commission, National Consumer Council and other regulatory bodies that have been established in respect of the recently privatised public utilities all exist to safeguard the interest of the general public. These are not used to serve the interest of the political party in power or their leadership.

Another significant feature of British democracy is that even the conduct of MPs is from time to time called into question by fellow members in the House of Commons. Besides the standard Parliamentary Select Committees, independent authorities are set up to investigate any allegations of misconduct when matters of grave concern arise. For instance, the report of Lord Nolan's committee on how standards of MPs might be improved was debated by the House on May 18, 1995. The committee's recommendations were accepted and among these were: MPs should be required to disclose the precise amount of income they receive from any outside source; appointments to any quango should be independently vetted; likewise the jobs that ministers take after leaving office should be independently vetted; and MPs should not work for lobbying companies.

When President Jayawardene using his two-thirds majority in parliament dismissed the entire supreme court and instigated mobs to attack judges who handed down unpopular judgments, he was undermining democracy. When police officers found guilty of human rights violations by the supreme court were rewarded the very next day by promotions to senior positions, justice was ridiculed. The last free and fair election was in 1977, which brought the UNP under the leadership of J.R. Jayawardene to power with four-fifth majority. When democratic principles and values were thrown overboard by the powerful rulers for their own benefit, the media in Sri Lanka failed to speak out on behalf of the powerless people. The numerous deceitful measures taken defiantly by the leaders, starting from drafting the country's constitution with ulterior political motives to the politicisation of the institutions, whose independence is vital for assuring the rule of law and adherence to democratic principles, would not have been possible had the media protested in the way they did recently against the objectionable provisions in the Broadcasting Authority Bill. The independent press has often been gagged by the im-

position of censorship but even when it was free from censorship, it did not play its role to inform the people objectively not only of events but also of their consequences.

The role of the opposition in Parliament is perceived by Sri Lankan politicians very differently from that performed by their British counterparts. In Britain the opposition functions as the government-in-waiting, having its shadow cabinet to follow closely the operations of the various Ministries and Departments. Policies are examined and even the conduct of Ministers are closely monitored by their counterparts in the shadow cabinet. Constructive and responsible criticisms based on facts are made as and when the need arises. The absence of the above practice in Sri Lanka shows the negative attitude of Lankan politicians when they lose the power to rule and have to serve the public from the opposition.

Ethnic and Cultural Diversity

People of different races, religions and cultures coexist along with the majority English. The sectarian violence is between the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. The IRA, a paramilitary organization in Northern Ireland had been engaged in violent acts directed against the British establishment. However, the British government did not react to these acts with vengeance by harassing the Irish Catholics indiscriminately even when Lord Mountbatten (Queen's cousin and the first Governor-General of India) was killed by the IRA. There have been few racially motivated attacks against citizens of Asian origin in the past but the authorities have never condoned such acts. Church leaders too have persistently condemned racial hatred and are active in promoting tolerance and unity.

Importantly, there are various independent organizations like the Commission for Racial Equality, Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and the British Refugee Council that expose any discriminatory acts against coloured immigrants and espouse equality of citizens, regardless of their ethnic origins, sex and colour of their skin. There are the Citizens Advice Bureaus in almost all council boroughs, where concerned citizens can obtain proper advice free of charge on matters ranging from employment to civic rights. The scheme by which legal aid is made available to the needy to finance their legal costs is also noteworthy. What is significant here is that these organisations are financially supported by the British government and allowed to function independently. There is the independent Police Complaint Authority to investigate complaints against the police officer(s) alleged to have misbehaved.

Everyone wielding power in government is accountable to some truly independent body and in the end to the people.

In Victory and Defeat

On May 2, the day after the general election those who saw the swift and smooth way the outgoing Prime Minister John Major handed the reins of power to the victorious Tony Blair will never forget the decorum with which the two behaved during the few hours preceding the swearing in ceremony of the new Prime Minister at Buckingham Palace. John Major sent his top official car to Tony Blair's residence for him to travel to the Palace, while he used the older car to go there first to submit his resignation to the Queen. In the mean time, arrangements were under way for him to vacate the official residence at 10, Downing Street. The short speech John Major delivered outside Downing Street before resigning was very dignified and fitting for the occasion. He said: "It has been an immense privilege to serve as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom over the past 6 ½ years.

It is a privilege that comes to very few people and it is a very precious privilege indeed. I have been a Member of Parliament for 18 years. I have been a member of the Government for 14 years, of the Cabinet for ten years and Prime Minister since 1990. When the curtain falls it is time to get off the stage and that is what I propose to do". He said all these without any visible anger accepting defeat gracefully.

Tony Blair when he arrived in Downing Street from the Palace after being sworn in as the new Prime Minister said in his speech: "I should like to begin, if I may, by paying tribute to my predecessor John Major for his dignity and his courage over these last few days and for the manner of his leaving, the essential decency of which is the mark of the man and I am pleased to pay tribute to him. As I stand here before No 10 Downing Street, I know all too well the huge responsibility that is upon me and the great trust that the British people have placed in me. This is not a mandate for dogma or for doctrine, or a return to the past, but it was a mandate to get those things done in our country that desperately need doing for the future of Britain. And this new Labour Government will govern in the interests of all our people - the whole of the nation. That I can promise you. And it will be a Government that seeks to restore trust in politics in this country, that cleans it up, that decentralises it, that gives people hope once again that politics is and should be always about the service of the public. Today, enough of talking - it is time now to do."

When Tony Blair, the youngest Brit-

ish Prime Minister in this century selected his Cabinet team, he saw to it that it represented the entire party spectrum. The Cabinet and the Power Steering Committee (the inner Cabinet group) are likewise not restricted to the major ethnic group, the English. Many senior Labour politicians are from Scotland. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Defense and Foreign Secretaries and the Transport Minister represent Scottish constituencies. The Lord Chancellor Lord Irvine of Lairg is a Scot. In fact nearly a third of the members of the new cabinet are Scots for no reason other than their competence and long period of service to the Labour movement. In the previous Tory government also there were Scots, though not in this proportion. Their ethnic background did not stand in the way of these appointments. The English and the Scots too had quarrelled in the distant past and engaged in warfare. Although they are determined to safeguard their separate national identities, for the majority the past is history.

Labour party's well planned approach (its manifesto was released a year before the election), that brought great success in the general election was also evident in the way the new Labour Government started the business of governing immediately after assuming office. No time was wasted in victory celebrations and in organizing the facilities for those in power to lead a new pompous lifestyle. In many Eastern societies, the perception of those who have acquired power is that power must be conspicuous for the people to respect them! They then set about exhibiting the power they have acquired in the most indecent way.

The new Government did not have to devote its time in organizing the means to punish its political opponents. Nor did they have to engage in witch-hunts to punish civil servants who worked enthusiastically under the previous government. The time the Sri Lankan governments had spent over the last two decades in such vengeful work was colossal. This became routine since the time political neutrality of the public service was destroyed for narrow partisan reason. Even some progressive reforms introduced by a previous government are anathema to the succeeding government, solely for the sake of denying any credit to its political opponent. Time has little value for Lankan legislators when it comes to solving national problems.

The very first words in the Queen's speech (May 14) were; "My Government intends to govern for the benefit of the whole nation." This was also reiterated by Tony Blair when he said: "We have started as we mean to go on offering leadership, setting the agenda, not having it set for us. In short, doing the job we were elected

to do - governing for the whole nation." The Government's seriousness to implement its election manifesto immediately was evident from the 22 Bills and 3 White Papers listed in the Queen's speech for action during the very first session of the new Parliament. Top priority is given to education and constitutional reforms.

The Referendums Bill for Scottish and Welsh devolution was the first Bill introduced on May 15, the day after the opening of the new Parliament. The new Labour Government has also decided to introduce a Bill that will incorporate into the UK law the main provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights. A new law to make racially motivated violence and racial harassment specific offence is expected to be in the Crime and Disorder Bill included in the list. Britain's foreign policy will have an ethical dimension with a focus on human rights. According to the new Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, it will "support the demands of other people for the democratic rights on which we insist for ourselves."

Devolution

The Scots and the Welsh have never complained that they have been the victims of discrimination by governments in Westminster in education or employment. There have never been attempts by the British governments to change intentionally the demographic character of Scotland and Wales. In terms of the proportion of the population, Scotland has a higher ratio of MPs in the British Parliament than in England. There is already some decentralisation via the Scottish and Welsh offices functioning under the direction of the respective cabinet Ministers in Westminster.

Scotland has a strong national identity and a majority of Scots have long backed a Scottish legislative assembly. This is not to be mistaken for complete independence. The opinion of the peoples of Scotland and Wales on devolution is clearly evident from the results of the general election. The Conservatives' robust defence of the Union in its present form, in the election campaign also contributed to their humiliating defeat in Scotland and Wales. The party failed to win a single seat. The Scottish National Party (SNP) won only 6 out of the 72 seats in Scotland. 56 seats went to Labour (50) and Lab Co-op (6). Liberal Democrats got elected in 10 Scottish constituencies. The Welsh nationalists (Plaid Cymru) won only 4 out of the 40 seats in Wales. The pro-devolution parties, Labour (31), Lab Co-op (3) and Lib Dem (2) captured all the other 36 seats.

A White Paper giving details of the proposed parliament and assembly is expected to be published soon. With re-

gard to the former, it is expected to follow closely the recommendations of the Scottish constitutional convention, a mainly Labour and Liberal Democrat body. The parliament will be a single chamber, headed by a chief minister and would sit for a fixed four-year term. The areas excluded from the parliament's powers will be: Defence and foreign affairs; Immigration and nationality; Social security; Economy and tax (except for power to vary income tax by 3p on basic rate).

Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott's additional role as the Secretary of State for the Regions is an indication of the importance given by the new government to devolve powers to the regions. The policy of the "new" Labour in contrast to "old" Labour is to move away from centralised power by giving "home rule" to the people. A Bill is to be brought forward to establish regional development agencies in England outside London. The latter is expected to have an elected mayor and a strategic body. The leaders must be aware that if the Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly are seen to be successful, English regions too will opt for their own assemblies, which will lead to a more federal system than envisaged now. Labour views the constitutional reform as "modernising what is outdated and to make fair what is unjust." Labour leaders seem to have the vision to look ahead into the twenty-first century and realise that this change is vital for economic and social stability and progress in the new era.

Tony Blair's first official visit outside Britain, after assuming office was to Northern Ireland on May 16. He offered Sinn Fein the chance of meeting government officials before an IRA ceasefire, and the first meeting took place on May 21. He also made it clear in his speech that he wanted Sinn Fein to join the multi-party talks but insisted that they would be excluded until the IRA declared a cease-fire. Tony Blair had consulted his predecessor John Major about his plan to make another effort to bring Sinn Fein into the full political process before announcing it in Belfast. Like the Conservative government, Labour also wants to seek reconciliation and a political settlement in Northern Ireland working in co-operation with the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Conclusion

The majority of the population even in the so-called matured democracies are not intellectuals. The few enlightened persons, who have the vision and the courage to speak out against injustices and ominous blunders of their rulers do so in the larger interest of their societies. Those responsible for the vindictive, violent and

un-Buddhist politics practised in Sri Lanka undermined democracy for achieving their narrow goals. The intelligentsia and the print media by their acts of commission and omission, particularly the broadsheets had condoned it. Paradoxically, Buddhist clergy too had played a major part in its development. But it is the innocent people, who are called now to make sacrifices and are paying with their lives for the horrendous blunders of their leaders in the hope of a better and secure future for their societies.

What is practised in Britain is not majoritarian democracy. It cannot work satisfactorily in any multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-cultural societies. Like the Scots and the Welsh, the Tamils in Sri Lanka too have a distinct regional identity. The threat to peace will remain, as long as ruling power is not devolved sufficiently to the regions (as in Britain need not be symmetrical) and by connection to the minority groups. The arguments advanced by some economists against devolution ignore the failure of centralised decision-making, over the past 50 years, to achieve high economic growth and living standards seen in some East Asian countries.

Separation is not a viable option for lasting peace, as this will not solve the human and economic problems and lessen the hostility. Constraints on resources for investment in the economic and social sectors as a result of pre-emption by defence will become a major source of discontent and unrest.

In a climate of enmity, minorities living in mixed areas will also suffer. Devolution offers a chance to narrow the wide gap between the people and their rulers. The latter will be compelled to accord priority to the needs of the local people. They will also be conscious of their responsibility to the people. In short, by devolving powers to the regions democracy can be made to serve the people in all the regions, rather than the narrow political interests of the two main parties in Sri Lanka.

Professor Robert Oberst, a visiting American scholar in Sri Lanka has quite rightly warned that the political patronage system that has paralysed Sri Lanka's bureaucracy and police poses a great threat to democracy in the island. According to him, devolution of power would be resisted by those who fear losing immense patronage benefits in a reformed political structure. Those who are stalling the select committee process by either opposing the devolution proposals or not taking a stand at all are in effect obstructing the replacement of the political patronage system by political democracy. □

The Integration of Peace Talks and the Peace Process

V Ambalavanar, Former Additional Secretary to the President

During the recent months, two groups of Members of Parliament visited two countries, studied conflict resolution and came out with the joint recommendation that the Government and the LTTE should re-commence negotiations with a view to resolving the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. It is indeed a healthy sign to find Parliamentarians from different political parties making a joint statement of this nature. In this paper, an attempt is made to provide a framework under which such talks could take place without necessarily throwing away any useful work that has been done to date.

The recent agreement between the President and the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament was a bold step by the two leaders, the like of which was never seen before in the post-independence period in this country. That a facilitator had to come in to help in the process, though could have been avoided, nevertheless serves as a useful device for future efforts in bringing peace to Sri Lanka. It is worth noting that neither the President nor the Leader of the Opposition conceded anything to the facilitator, either before, during or after the signing of the letters that have been exchanged by them. They did not concede anything to any other party either, except for the assurance provided to all peace loving people of Sri Lanka that peace efforts will be taken above party politics and the results will be honored by both parties, if there is prior agreement on them. There was also special reference to talks even with the LTTE.

In this situation, the logical questions are, "Can peace talks be resumed with the LTTE? If so who should participate? What is the position of the Government's Devolution Package? What is the role of the Parliamentary Select Committee? How could the parties which are not directly involved in the negotiations get their views considered? How could the safety and security of everyone guaranteed? Above all how could the peace process be sustained in an environment where man-made disasters cannot be ruled out?" Obviously, there are no simple and clear answers to all these and related questions. However there is nothing like trying some answers in the interest of peace in Sri Lanka.

Simple logic tells us that if two parties are fighting each other, peace can be made only if either party loses or if they stop fighting and place faith in talks to resolve their problems. Volumes and volumes of material written on the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka have shown the damage that is being done to those involved in the war as well as others in the country who have no connection with the fighting. The previous Government could not end the war even after eleven long years. The present Government did not find it possible to end the war either, during the first half of its term even with enhanced efforts, the likes of which were not witnessed previously during the post-independence period. Even at this stage, if the advice of the fighters is sought, we may get the reply that the war can be won. This applies to any modern fighter who has access to deadly weapons and other war equipment. Similar encouragement will also be forthcoming to support the war from arm-chair fighters who do not lose anything by the war and those who think that scores should be settled.

The large majority of the people of this country do not belong to the categories referred to in the previous paragraph. It is desirable even at this late stage for the warring parties to take note of the views of these people who do not have bullets to stop the war but have the ballot to throw out those who refuse to stop the war. This did happen in 1994. There is no reason to expect that it will not happen again within the next three years, if the war continues like this. The leaders of the major political parties have recognized this. Several Parliamentarians and others have also recognized this. Therefore the war should be brought to an end.

One of the significant steps needed at this stage is therefore a cease-fire. If it is brought about, Parliamentarians will have proper environment to sit and discuss the measures meant to bring about peace to the country in a calm atmosphere. It is particularly important to ensure that emotional reactions to destruction by violence do not cloud positive and objective analysis by those who are entrusted with the responsibility of doing justice to the job that they have been elected to do. The cease-fire should also be properly

monitored by an independent party, preferably a foreign party acceptable to both sides. The Government, the LTTE, the official opposition party and other parties and organizations should help to stop the violence that is causing so much of destruction to the people and their properties.

A second factor of crucial importance is the feedback from the people to the Parliamentary Select Committee's work. Here again the need for a peaceful atmosphere needs no extra emphasis. Of special relevance is the feedback from the people of the North and East and even from other areas. No solution worked out through the ongoing process could have much credibility as a solution if the people as a whole are denied the facility of studying the measures contemplated and making their views known to the Select Committee.

The Tamils in particular should feel that they are free to go to possible meeting places, have discussions, and make their views known to the Select Committee without the fear of being taken into custody by law enforcement authorities on suspicion. In this process, facilities which enable Tamils and others outside the North and East to interact with the people of the North and East are most desirable. It is therefore very necessary to revise the various security checks within and between regions to help the Select Committee process in a meaningful way. This is a matter that the Select Committee itself should insist on to ensure that all sections of the people of this country are provided adequate facilities to make representations to it. The cease-fire referred to earlier will be a first step in the right direction.

While a cease-fire is a first necessary step to bring about a calm atmosphere in the country, of equal importance is the provision of the basic needs to the Lakhs of people who have been displaced from their homes. These people and the people elsewhere in the country, especially the Tamil speaking people, who overwhelmingly voted for peace at the last General and Presidential elections should be convinced that meaningful measures are taken to bring to an end the suffering that they have gone through during the past fourteen years. Provision of basic needs is thus a top priority item in any peace effort.

It is well known that the North and East of the country have been seriously affected by the violence of the past fourteen years. After the cease-fire, urgent matters that need attention are the resettlement of people, reconstruction and rehabilitation. While discussions on Devolution and related issues continue, the details of resettlement, reconstruction and

rehabilitation should be worked out simultaneously by groups consisting of Government representatives and the local political and administrative machinery, including the militant cadres in the respective areas. The participation of all these parties will be facilitated if the amnesty announced by the Government is kept open and the security of everyone is ensured. The rehabilitation should also cover the rehabilitation of human beings. In this connection, we must learn from what has been happening in the world and accept the fact that today's militants could be tomorrow's protectors of the Nation. The attitude of forgetting and forgiving is of crucial importance as preached by all our religions.

As noted earlier the country could not achieve peace by violent means for fourteen years. That peace cannot be achieved by violent means has been accepted earlier by both parties involved in the violent conflict in Sri Lanka. The earlier peace talks took place on this basis. When talks broke down, a clear strategy was not available to explore further peace initiatives without escalating the war. Consequently, mutual mistrust between the Government and the LTTE has increased.

Under the circumstances, if talks without mediation are not considered helpful by the Government and the LTTE, the obvious alternative is to have talks facilitated by third party mediators. If the Government and the main Opposition party who were not at war with each other found it necessary to have a facilitator to work out and sign an understanding of the type referred to earlier, can we expect the Government and the LTTE to commence peace talks without the help of a facilitator?

However, no third party will like to come in as a mediator if the parties involved in the conflict do not ask for such mediation. If the assistance of an international organization or another Government is considered helpful, the initiative to get such help, should be taken by the Government. Instead of continuing with the costly war, the Government should consider this option seriously, especially at a time when the mediation process could provide very useful feedback to the Select Committee. Such discussion with the help of a third party mediator should also bring the main opposition party directly into the process, thus giving meaning to the agreement signed by the President and the Leader of the Opposition. The other parties represented in Parliament as well as the rest of the country will have their say through the Select Committee process.

It was in fact unfortunate that the earlier talks were conducted without either party placing a peace package for con-

sideration. The earlier talks broke down in April 1995 and the Government announced a Devolution Package in August 1995. The Package has since been modified and a legal draft was released by the Government in January 1996. This draft has been subject to discussion at various levels, the most important one being the Parliamentary Select Committee. If the Government, the main Opposition party and the others involved in the Select Committee wish to have serious discussions with the LTTE, they could get together and prepare an initial document taking into consideration all the discussions that took place to date and make the same available as a political framework to resolve the conflict. Such a document along with proposals to meet basic needs of the affected people, planned approach on resettlement, reconstruction and rehabilitation, and guarantee of security to all concerned could be the basis for further dialogue on the subject. The initial document should be a highly innovative piece of work to make it attractive enough to the Tamil speaking people and the LTTE. The LTTE on its part should prepare a similar document and make the same available as an initial proposal. The feedback from the talks could be considered by the Select Committee from time to time for further action.

In an earlier paper, the Author has pointed out that the legal draft package announced by the Government is not a complete peace package. Additional steps that are necessary to bring about peace have also been stated in that paper. However, it is not intended to bring to focus all the suggestions in that paper, as the present purpose is to bring out a framework for a coordinated effort. Such coordinated effort should not end with the formulation and approval of an agreed peace package. Many agreements failed in the past for want of proper implementation.

Since proper implementation is of crucial importance to the success of the peace process, it is relevant to discuss some of the key issues involved in the monitoring, review, feedback and evaluation work connected with the final agreed package. In this regard, it is useful to note that the monitoring, review and feedback work should be carried out on a continuing basis during formulation and implementation. This will facilitate speedy corrective action whenever problems are encountered. Evaluation is an exercise that is to be undertaken at the end of a suitable phase in the implementation when we will like to know whether all the expected benefits have been realized.

In order to do the above in a satisfactory manner, it is necessary to briefly state the present (baseline) situation. At

present, we have an Executive Presidency which has been widely criticized by the people as not being suitable for us. The Provincial Councils System established under the unitary framework has been recognized as not suitable to meet the aspirations of the national minorities by the present governing party. The North-East Provincial Council was dissolved after functioning for a little over two years. Since then, for about eight years there had been no Provincial Council for that Province. When the People's Alliance sought a mandate from the people, it promised to provide for maximum devolution, stop the war and bring about peace. However, as noted earlier, peace through direct talks failed to materialize and in the absence of an alternative strategy to take the peace process forward, the war was enhanced as a war for peace.

The losses to the country resulting from the war, including expenditures on defence, which were estimated to add up to about Rs. 100 Billion per year when the present Government came to power have shot up to about Rs. 150 Billion per year since then. Likewise, the loss of life which was about 5,000 per year when the Government came into office, shot up to about 7,000 per year since then. More than six Lakhs of people from the North and East have lost their homes and become refugees. Over two Lakhs of students from those areas are struggling to continue their education in pathetic conditions under trees without adequate furniture, etc. and without even necessities such as exercise books and the like. Higher education in the North has almost come to a stand still. People throughout the country are living in constant fear that there may be a major attack or bomb blast. The several check points throughout the country, partially and totally closed roads and the presence of armed security personnel in many places serve as reminders of the above to the people as well as visitors to this country.

Our country which was said to be marching towards a newly industrialized country status not so long ago seems to be going in the opposite direction. Fall of per capita income, increasing unemployment, increase in the cost of living, fall in the standards of living, etc. are being faced by the people.

When actions are initiated to implement any peace package, three groups of activities should be subject to close monitoring, review and feedback process. Firstly, all the actions contemplated should be scheduled and prepared in the form of a programme, which should be subject to daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual monitoring as appropriate and adequate feedback provided to the decision makers. Secondly, the benefits and the

reduced harmful activities should be identified and made known to the decision makers and the people on a continuing basis. Thirdly, there should be an alertness to possible man made disasters that could upset the peace process. These tasks should be assigned to a Peace Secretariat that would function in a responsible manner with a sense of commitment to peace. During the early stages, this Secretariat should function as an organization which is primarily designed to handle disasters.

When reference is made to man made disasters, attention also needs to be given to ways and means of taking action to prevent disasters. Experts who have handled such situations elsewhere in the World will be able to advise as to how signals on impending disasters could be identified, monitored and feedback provided. There should be in position a countrywide monitoring arrangement. If disasters occur, they will create disturbances which in turn will put back the peace process. Hence there should also be in position a disaster mitigation arrangement.

A Peace Secretariat will be an important organization in the performance of the above tasks. However, a Secretariat alone cannot be expected to handle the above matters adequately. There should also be in position an organization which

could provide the necessary authority and status to the Secretariat and guide its activities. Key political leaders at the Central and Regional levels and peace workers should form such an organization. It is also desirable that the organization functions above party politics.

Reference was made to a Devolution Commission in the package of August 1995. It is most appropriate to arrange the functioning of the Secretariat referred to above, under a high powered Peace Commission (which could be made broad-based and vested with wider powers and authority than a Devolution Commission) as its supporting Secretariat. The establishment of a Peace Commission and the supporting Peace Secretariat are strongly suggested as integral parts of the peace package to handle implementation. The Commission should be headed by the President or the Prime Minister (after the Executive Presidential System is changed). The Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, Chief Ministers of the Regions, Members nominated from the Parliament (same number as the number of Chief Ministers) and not more than five Peace Workers appointed by the President should be the other members of the Commission. The administrative head of the Peace Secretariat should function as the Secretary of the Commission. (These are

analogous to a Disaster Management Council and a Disaster Management Secretariat suggested to handle natural disasters by a joint committee headed by the Author some years back).

New institutional arrangements created along with changes should come into existence, only in terms of the new needs. If there is a Peace Commission of the type suggested, it will provide an ideal opportunity to decide on all matters relating to Centre - Region conflicts through healthy consultations. The chances of witnessing the recurrence of the unfortunate experiences of some of the Provincial Councils will be considerably reduced. Even matters such as the need for State of Emergency in a Region could be discussed by the Peace Commission in the first instance and decisions are taken in consultation with it.

Summary of Suggestions and Concluding Remarks

(a) The costs of the war which has been going on for about fourteen years have been brought to focus. We have lost 5,000 to 7,000 lives per year, spent Billions and Billions of Rupees, destroyed Billions and Billions of Rupees worth of movable and immovable property in the process. By the quick resolution of all the problems, we

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The Sri Lankan government plan to set up the island's first coal-fired power plant in the remote north-western coastal village of Kalpitiya has run into trouble. Residents have complained that if the proposed 300 MW coal power plant, to be set up at Kalpitiya in the Puttalam district, 160 km north of Colombo, was implemented, they would lose their traditional livelihoods of farming and fishing.

"Installation of the power plant will seriously damage the current stable economic status of the people who mainly depend on agriculture and fishing without being a burden on the state," said the Buddhist monk Bulumulle Pannananda living in Norochcholaia, a prosperous village which borders the 300-acre site selected for the project.

"The people stand to lose all that if this project comes here. They are unlikely to stand by and let the authorities in Colombo have their wish," Pannananda added.

In April, one man was killed and several were injured when police opened fire at a group of about 5,000 people demonstrating against the planned power plant. The government thinks the protests are orchestrated by "outsiders."

Sri Lanka's Power and Energy Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte told a news conference recently that initial feasibility studies to get the project off the ground had

Protests Against Sri Lanka's First Coal-fired Power Plant

come to a halt due to opposition from some people. "But they are not local people. Interested parties have come to the scene from outside," Ratwatte said. "It may even be a lobby which does not like coal power to come to our country."

Ratwatte did not accuse anyone directly of trying to influence villagers, but said many people, who initially supported the idea, suddenly changed their minds. "There is a lot of misinformation. In the name of development, we appeal to the people not to yield to false propaganda," Ratwatte said.

Sri Lanka earlier shelved plans to set up a coal power plant near Trincomalee on the eastern coast after environmentalists vehemently protested, saying the natural monsoon and wind pattern would result in coal fumes being carried for many miles inland in a south-westerly direction, thus polluting a huge area. But Ratwatte claimed that the plant was temporarily put on hold till the security situation in the east improves, which would make the plant and its elaborate distribution network less vulnerable to attacks by separatist Tamil Tigers.

Plans for a second plant on the west

coast, utilising a soft loan provided by the Japanese government, were implemented shortly after the first one was shelved. The \$500 million plant,

which would be Sri Lanka's sole coal-fired power plant, is scheduled to begin servicing the national grid by the year 2003.

Officials for the state power utility Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB), which will own and operate the plant, say the project land had been surveyed and boundaries demarcated, leaving two villages to its north and south untouched. Soil testing and other research, which was to be carried out jointly with a team of Swiss consultants, have been delayed due to protests and unsettled conditions in the area, they say. The CEB says only a handful of farmers, living on the land identified for the project, will be affected and that they will be compensated with alternative land and housing. But villagers say a massive coal power plant at their doorstep would result in their farms being covered with coal dust from the plant, which would reduce their incomes, in addition to exposing them to diseases related to air and noise pollution.

Agricultural sources say the village of Norochcholaia currently supplies about 40 percent of the national requirement of onions in addition to shipping out truckloads of sweet potatoes, potatoes and other vegetables daily.

Coal as a source for generation of electricity has two widely-criticised drawbacks globally. One is that coal is a non-renewable source of energy and the other is that burning coal results in considerable pollution of the air. But Sri Lankan energy planners are convinced it is the country's future source of energy, even though all the raw material will have to be imported. They say a unit of electricity generated by a oil-fired plant would cost 5.5 cents, as compared to coal's 4.5 cents for a unit, which alone makes coal attractive for developing countries like Sri Lanka.

The CEB says it has proposed advanced anti-pollution methods to be installed at its plant at Kalpitiya and that it would not go ahead with the project if it fails to meet environmental standards. However the local fishermen are worried that sea water temperature could rise by as much as 7.5 centigrade due to the release of water used to cool down the plant's turbines. Villagers say it could damage the entire fishing industry of the area. But the CEB guarantees that warm water released from the plant will be lim-

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from page 22)

will bring to an end the violence that has been contributing to all these destruction.

(b) Through the cease-fire that comes out of the mediation efforts of a mediator acceptable to both parties and proper monitoring by the same mediator, the work of the Select Committee could be carried out in a more credible manner.

(c) The discussion and follow-up process through the Select Committee on issues where agreement is reached at joint negotiations involving the Government, the main opposition party and the LTTE with the help of a third party mediator is a very useful method. The two major political parties have agreed to take the ethnic problem above party politics. The above approach will thus add strength to the entire peace process. The LTTE, the other political parties and all other organizations should play their respective roles on the same basis.

(d) Basic needs should be provided as a matter of urgency to all the displaced persons and others who have been made refugees.

(e) While discussions on Devolution and related issues continue, the details of resettlement, reconstruction and rehabilitation should be worked out simultaneously by groups consisting of Government representatives and the local political and administrative machinery, including the militant cadres in the respective areas and steps taken for early implementation. The rehabilitation should also cover the rehabilitation of human beings. The amnesty offered by the Government should be kept open and the protection of everyone should be ensured.

(f) In this paper, it has been briefly described as to how the Peace Commission and its supporting Peace Secretariat should function to implement the solution to the Ethnic Problem.

(g) The suggestions which have been made in this paper attempt to show a peaceful way to handle a problem which has proved intractable to date. There will be always some delays in the attainment of the full benefits of any peace process. Therefore, all of us should patiently carry out the respective tasks that are expected of us. □

SAARC NINTH SUMMIT - A POSITIVE OUTLOOK FOR FUTURE

Leaders of the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) at the end of their a three-day summit held in the Maldivian capital in mid May adopted a declaration to boost trade and foster good neighbourly relations and appointed a 15-Member Group of Eminent Persons to recommend ways and means to revitalise the organisation.

SAARC, which represents one-fifth of the world's population, consists of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The South Asian leaders declared that they remained firmly committed to combating terrorism and drug trafficking which pose a serious threat to security and stability in countries of the region and stressed the urgent need to complete domestic legislation in member-states so that SAARC's anti-terrorism and anti-drugs conventions can be enforced.

The declaration also urged all SAARC member states to work towards implementation of the 1996 U.N. Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism. It also called for international action to halt activities which help terrorist groups to collect funds for their activities in South Asia. The leaders also agreed to exchange information regularly on terrorism and drug offences.

On the presently stalled Middle-east

peace process the South Asian leaders "expressed concern at the setback to the peace process and unleashing of violence against Palestinian people in occupied territories and the resulting threat to the peace process due to policies of the government of Israel in establishing and enlarging Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories." They also called for "the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and the establishment of a sovereign state under the leadership of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation), their sole legitimate representative, which could co-exist with its neighbours in peace and harmony."

The declaration also blamed the developed countries' consumption patterns and poverty in the developing nations for the worsening of the environment in different parts of the world, including their own region. It said, "Unsustainable consumption patterns in the developed countries and widespread poverty in the developing countries are major factors contributing to ecological degradation in different parts of the world."

While "both developed and developing countries were required to undertake specific initiatives to face environmental concerns, stress should also be laid on the acceleration of development in developing countries to enable them to face

environmental challenges," it added.

The leaders also urged swift implementation of the recommendations of SAARC's two regional studies - one on the greenhouse effect and its impact on the region and the other on the causes and consequences of natural disasters and the preservation of the environment. They asked environment ministers of the member countries, who will meet annually as decided by the summit, to study the feasibility of drawing up a regional treaty on the environment and stressed the urgent need for co-operation through exchanging information, strategies and technologies for combating pollution of air and water.

The leaders also called for the urgent implementation of the agreements reached at the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, and decided to adopt a common and collective position at the June special session of the U.N. General Assembly.

The following are key points in the declaration:

- ★ Informal political talks to be started within SAARC to relieve tensions and foster good neighbourly relations in order to strengthen and speed up regional co-operation.

- ★ A round of talks to be launched shortly to cut tariffs and remove non-tariff barriers with an aim to set up a free trade area called the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) by 2001.

- ★ A Group of Eminent Persons (GEP), consisting of officials with experience in SAARC activities, to identify ways to revitalise the organisation.

- ★ Special measures to be taken to look after the interests of smaller countries when intensifying regional economic co-operation.

- ★ Steps to ensure gender equality and bring women into the mainstream of the region's socio-economic development.

- ★ A strengthening of existing laws to combat trafficking of women and children in the region.

- ★ Stern measures to be taken to protect children from all forms of exploitation, and a study group to be set up to examine the reasons behind the problem.

- ★ The possibility of drawing up a Regional Treaty on the Environment as part of a collective initiative to address environmental problems.

- ★ Member states to complete legislation to implement the SAARC Regional Conventions on Suppression of Terrorism and on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

- ★ Civil aviation authorities of member states to meet shortly to establish direct air links between SAARC capitals to promote people-to-people contact and tour-

(continued from page 23)

ited to a short distance from the point of discharge.

"We want the CEB to give a detailed description of the project without hiding the truth. But we also realise big power projects are a necessary evil we have to learn to live with," a spokesman for Foundation Limited, a non-governmental environmental organisation, said.

CBE's Chairman Argon Deraniyagala said it was necessary for the plant to begin servicing the national grid as scheduled in 2003, due to the CBE's long-term plans to reduce Sri Lanka's current high dependence on hydropower. Sri Lanka plans to reduce its reliance on hydros also been delayed by more than one week, Meteorological Department officials said.

Sri Lanka has an installed capacity of 1,115 MW of hydropower and 250 MW

of thermal power. The CEB has said it plans to reduce dependence on hydropower by building more thermal power plants and buying electricity from private plants. The first two, a 115 MW gas turbine and a 40 MW diesel plant, will be on stream before the end of June, Ratwatte said. A 51 MW diesel plant, funded by a consortium headed by KHD Great Britain, a unit of Germany's Kloeckner Humboldt-Deutz AG, is scheduled to be operational by August next year.

Japan's Mitsui Engineering & Shipbuilding Company signed a letter of intent in May to build and operate a 60 MW barge-mounted power plant. Two 150 MW combined cycle plants, to be located on the outskirts of Colombo, are among CBE's long-term plans to boost thermal supply over hydropower. □

ism.

★ A call for international action to prevent the abuse of Refugee Conventions and to halt activities that help terrorist groups collect funds for their activities in South Asia.

★ A call on developed countries to substantially reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers and desist from restrictive trade practices.

★ The leaders expressed concern over international trends to impose new protectionist barriers by linking imports from developing countries to politically motivated social and environmental values and concerns, such as human rights.

★ The leaders said the Middle East peace process was threatened by Israel's policy of establishing and enlarging new settlements in Palestinian territory.

According to the declaration, the Group of Eminent Persons (GEP) will "undertake a comprehensive appraisal of SAARC, and identify measures including mechanisms to further vitalise and enhance the effectiveness of the association in achieving its objectives."

The GEP is also charged with developing a long-range vision and formulating a perspective plan of action including a SAARC agenda which will spell out the target to be achieved by the year 2020.

In a speech delivered at the opening of the summit, Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral said Asia accounted for 60 percent of gross world product in 1820, but the percentage dropped to 20 by 1950. The figure will go back up to 60 percent by 2020, Gujral added, citing projections from "authoritative studies."

The year 2020 "has become a symbolic as well as a specific destination, representing both perfect vision and a target year," he said.

The GEP, composed of two people from each member country and the SAARC Secretary General, will report to the leaders on its work at the next SAARC summit scheduled for February 1998 in Sri Lanka. The Male summit also decided to extend the tenure of the SAARC Secretary General to a "non-renewable term of three years" with a view to "enhancing the effectiveness of the role and functioning of the Secretariat."

The SAARC Secretariat was established in January 1987 and the Secretary General is named on the principle of rotation in alphabetical order for a period of two years upon nomination by a member state. The present Secretary General, Naeem Hasan from Pakistan, took up the job on January 1, 1996.

The summit also provided an opportunity for the leaders of India and Pakistan to meet face for the first time in four years. The meeting between Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral and Paki-

stan's Nawaz Sharif, held on the sidelines of a regional summit, raised hopes for progress toward ending the hostility that has produced three wars since the partition of the sub-continent in 1947. The main issue is rival claims by India and Pakistan to the Himalayan territory of Kashmir, a cause of two of their three wars.

Commentators believe that the proceedings at the ninth summit of the South Asian leaders clearly reflected a feeling that attitudes to the regional grouping have undergone a sea change. From being branded a "poor man's club" and a "club of the deaf, dumb and blind" (because its charter eschews the discussion of anything controversial among member-states), observers in member-countries have begun to sit up and take notice of the SAARC.

They think the meeting at Male has given positive outlook for the future with a renewed chance to transform the organisation from just a ceremonial photo-opportunity to a true agency for inter-state co-operation. "The mood has changed from one of cynicism to cautious optimism," said one long-time SAARC-watcher in New Delhi. And Kamlesh Sharma, a senior official of India's foreign ministry said, "India's new policy of non-reciprocity has completely changed the situation in the last one year." He was referring to what has become to be called the "Gujral Doctrine," initiated by Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, who was until recently was India's Foreign Minister in the United Front government.

In his 10-month tenure as Foreign Minister, Gujral jettisoned India's traditional insistence on reciprocity in its dealings with neighbours. Last March, for instance, he unilaterally eased visa restrictions on Pakistanis visiting India. The flow of visitors is still minuscule, but for the first time in half a century the problem has gone from being one of getting a visa to one of getting a flight.

Transportation links, like other links between the countries of the regions, are undeveloped, having fallen prey to years of political hostility. It is easier for a Sri

Lankan to fly to Lahore through Bangkok than through Delhi. Observers are hoping that the latest thaw in India's relations with Pakistan will prove more durable than previous ones.

While improvements in India's relations with Pakistan are still confined largely to atmospherics, the Gujral Doctrine has yielded more significant dividends in improving relations with Bangladesh, with the signing of the agreement on the sharing of Ganga River waters last year. Moreover, India's new stance has given Nepal the comfort it needed to agree to go ahead with the long-discussed joint development of the Mahakali hydro-project.

Indeed one of the most encouraging developments of the past year has been the series of official level meetings to formalise the Nepal initiative and form a sub-regional "Quadrangle" of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal to identify and plan joint projects. Until recently even the principle of multilateral planning for such projects was anathema to India, with its insistence on bilateralism.

Just days before the South Asian leaders gathered in Male, a disagreement that had threatened to divide the SAARC into two groups led by the sub-continental arch-rivals, India and Pakistan, was fortunately patched up. Foreign ministers of the seven nations resolved the dispute over regional sub-groupings ahead of the summit.

Dispute arose in April when India and three small neighbours - Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal - agreed to set up a smaller group to co-operate in water-sharing, the environment, transport and trade. Pakistan, and to a lesser extent Sri Lanka and the Maldives, objected, saying the Growth Quadrangle sub-group was at odds with the spirit of the 12-year-old SAARC, which aimed to set up a regional free trade area by 2005.

Pakistan saw the Growth Quadrangle as an attempt by its bigger neighbour India to isolate Pakistan. "Pakistan at this point in time is extremely apprehensive that it will be left out, partly because you

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will find the formation of non-SAARC groupings emerging. This is being looked here as an attempt to subvert SAARC," Samina Ahmed, a research analyst at Islamabad-based Institute of Regional Studies, said reflecting Pakistani thinking on the matter.

But India argued that the four nations in the sub-regional group shared common problems, particularly in the areas of water resources and transport, which could be addressed by special projects.

The festering dispute that threatened the summit was resolved when SAARC Foreign Ministers agreed at the weekend that member countries could co-operate in smaller groups provided the agreements applied to specific projects and did not undermine SAARC. "It has been agreed that under the SAARC charter, some member countries can co-operate with each other but remaining within the SAARC," a senior Pakistani diplomat said. "Bilateral or even quadrilateral projects don't weaken SAARC, provided they are specific projects," an Indian diplomat said.

The other factor giving a new impetus to SAARC, apart from the improving politics of the region, is a turnaround on the trade front. Trade liberalisation and other economic matters were originally left out of the SAARC program because the other members feared they would be swamped by Indian exports. Trade be-

tween the SAARC countries was a paltry three percent of the total trade of the member countries until 1994. However with the substantial opening up of all the economies of the region, the natural complementarities and lower freight costs of trading within the region have begun to assert themselves.

Intra-SAARC trade flows, although far below their importance in colonial times, and small compared to other regional groupings, have now climbed back to about five percent of total trade. While India increased its exports to SAARC countries by 50 percent in 1995, its imports from them went up by a similar amount. The smaller countries are beginning to see the size of the Indian economy as an opportunity rather than a threat, viewing it not only as a market but as a source of investments and know-how in joint ventures.

The summit gave its blessing to the expected finalisation this year of two SAARC conventions, one on the promotion and protection of investments, and the other on the avoidance of double taxation. A body for the harmonisation of customs procedures has already been set up and an agreement in principle signed for SAARC countries to have their own arbitration mechanism for trade disputes.

Some observers are of the view that SAARC provides the ideal depoliticised

forum in which to implement such advances. "It is inconceivable," said a Indian foreign office official, "that political sensitivities in India and Pakistan would have allowed them to negotiate such measures bilaterally."

The South Asian Preferential Trade Area (SAPTA), first proposed by Sri Lanka in the 1993 summit, is being implemented much faster than originally expected, with the third round of tariff cuts, now in progress, expected to turn its attention also to the removal of quantitative restrictions which have become even more constraining now that tariffs are coming down. The aim is to usher in zero tariffs in a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) "preferably by the year 2000 or at the latest by 2005." The latter date has been chosen to accommodate Pakistan which continues to be ambivalent about trade with India. However faced with growing volumes Indian exports disguised as third country exports, and of smuggling, important sections of Pakistani opinion are beginning to see the desirability of allowing Indian imports in openly. Islamabad has announced its agreement in principle to grant India Most Favoured Nation trade status, and is probably awaiting a suitable trade-off from India. Improvement in bilateral trade is expected to figure prominently in future discussions between India and Pakistan. □



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Caste Clashes Rock Tamil Nadu

T N Gopalan, Madras

Periyar EVR should be turning in his grave. His much-vaunted Tamil society is fully stretched on the rack - but it is not the Aryans or the Brahmins with whom the Dravidians or the non-Brahmins are locking horns, but with the castes at the bottom rung of the Brahminical hierarchy, the untouchables, the Panchamars, now known as the Dalits in most parts of the country.

For nearly a month now, the southern districts of the state have been rocked by murderous clashes between the Thevars and the Pallar sect among the Dalits.

Thevars themselves are considered the intermediate castes, in fact hardly a few rungs above the Dalits and have been the backbone of the Dravidian movement, especially of the DMK, for long in the southern region.

Chief Minister Karunanidhi who never ceases to harp on the need for unity among all Tamils, read the non-Brahmin castes, including the Dalits and always waxes eloquent on the tremendous strides made by the Tamil society thanks to the Dravidian movement, is at his wit's end. When there were similar clashes, certainly much more intense than is the case now, in the latter part of 1995, the DMK was gloating on the inability of the then AIADMK government to rein in the violent elements and even darkly hinted that a Brahmin Jayalalitha was instigating the attacks on the Dailies and was in fact insidiously seeking to destroy the unity among the non-Brahmin castes. But now the boot is on the other foot. All his passionate rhetoric and desperate appeals to the warring communities have failed to stem the violence. And worse many of Karunanidhi's own supporters among the sociologists and newspaper columnists have started accusing him of allowing the Thevars to run amok, leaving the Dailies in the lurch.

The irony will be complete when one realises that the latest round of conflicts were sparked off when the DMK government sought to implement a decision taken during the last days of the Jayalalitha regime, and it was over such an apparently innocuous issue of naming a transport corporation.

Nothing much might be in a name for the more rational among the human beings, but in a society like that of the Tamils,

especially one which has been under the rule of the Dravidian parties for over three decades now, all kinds of symbols and symbolic gestures, have come to be emotionally loaded, and terrifyingly so as it marches into the twenty-first century.

Anxious to shrug off the pro-Thevar tag, Jayalalitha had decided to bifurcate the state-owned Pandyan Transport Corporation, operating bus services in the southern Tamil Nadu and name the new entity after Suntharalingam, a little-known Dalit hero. Actually there were no protests at the time of the announcement then, but when the present government merely sought to give effect to that decision, it evoked violent protests from the Thevars of the area.

Initially it only started off as obstruction of road-traffic and some stray stone-throwing incidents, surely nothing more than symbolic protests by the agitated Thevars. They were protesting because they considered it an insult to their community pride that buses plying in the areas populated by them should carry the name of the hero of a lower caste and one with whom they have been in a state of an undeclared war for the last few years.

With some tactful handling, prompt action against the mischievous elements, the agitation could have been nipped in the bud at an early stage. But the police were a bit reluctant to come down hard on the Thevars for obvious reasons, increasing the resentment among the Pallars whose nerves were already on the edge any way. And more important the Dailies in the southern districts have become increasingly militant and are ever ready to jump into the fray at the slightest provocation. Even during the 1995 clashes, though it was the administration itself which had abetted the Thevars, letting loose a reign of terror on the Dailies, the latter too had been the aggressors in many an instance and felled down many innocent Thevars.

And the rallying point this time round for the Dailies is Dr Krishnaswamy K, a medical doctor in his forties, hailing from Coimbatore but who shot into fame during the 1995 clashes. It was he who uncompromisingly championed the cause of the Dalits at the receiving end, and finally

managed to get elected to the state Assembly from the Ottapidaram constituency, reserved for the Scheduled Castes and dominated the Pallars. Once he smelled blood, he was not going to rest in peace, but predictably he kept upping the ante constantly.

He has been repeatedly making highly provocative speeches, slighting the Thevars no end, leaving a trail of bitterness and blood. In fact his reported statement that Suntharalingam, a Dalit, had scored over Pandyan, presumably a common name among the Thevars, has been cited as an excuse by the Thevars for their latest onslaught.

Anyway as the Thevars took to the streets, the Dailies hit back viciously and in no time Madurai, Kamarajar VOC and Tirunelveli districts were aflame - men and women hacked to death, even burnt alive and properties looted and destroyed. Elsewhere statues of Muthuramalinga Thevar and of Dr Ambedkar were damaged, increasing the tension still further. While the former is a godhead among the Thevars, the latter is of course the darling of the Dailies. Any perceived insult to their memories inevitably gives rise to serious clashes.

At one stage the Dalits started taking on even the Naadaars who had nothing to do with the Thevar agitation. The southern districts seemed paralysed for a time and only some belated police action brought things under some control.

Karunanidhi was caught in a dilemma. Thevars would not go back on their demand that the Sundaralingam buses do not ply "in their areas." And any retraction on the issue would be seen as a betrayal by the Dailies. Many parts of the VOC district had become the hot-bed of the more militant among the Dailies. In fact bomb-making has become a cottage industry there. Krishnaswamy was hell-bent on creating more and more trouble.

For their part the Thevars, feeling cheated at the loss of their patron-saint, Sasikala, were out to do anything to regain their "lost dignity". Though the Thevars have always been a major part of the DMK's constituency, during the Jaya regime, Sasikala patronised and promoted the Thevars like never before. Though she actually hails from the Kallar community, it is broadbanded under the term Mukkalathor along with the Thevars and the Agumbadiyars. Not surprisingly then in some places during their picketing the agitationists demanded the immediate release of Sasikala from the prison.

Karunanidhi did not dare antagonise the Thevars either. As a way out he suggested that the Sundaralingam buses do not ply along the "more sensitive routes"

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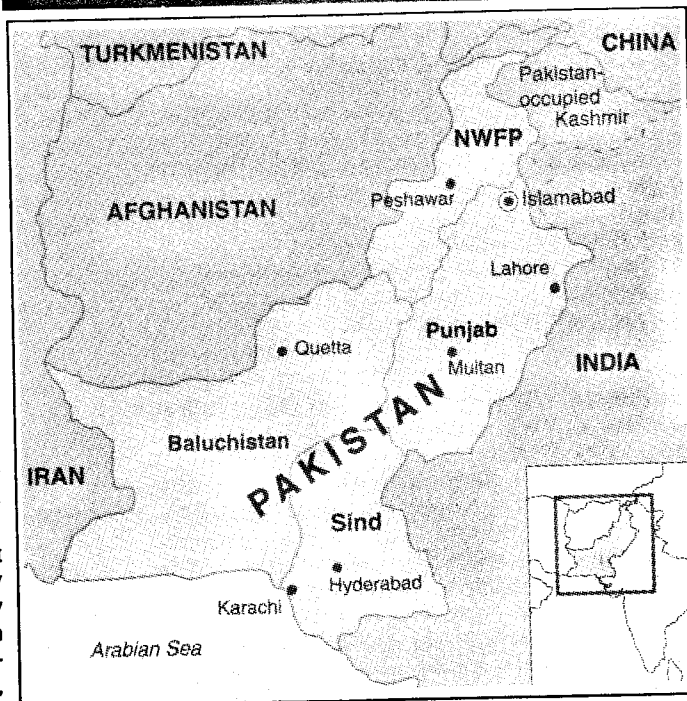
India's worst fears came true last month when the Taliban militia overran several vital positions in northern Afghanistan, forcing Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum to flee to Turkey. India's fears centred around the level of Pakistani involvement in the latest Taliban offensive. After all, Gen Dostum's Mazar-i-Sharif was one of the last bastions of resistance to Taliban, along with Ahmed Shah Masood's Tajik guerillas and the Iran-backed Shi'ite militiamen of the Hizb-i-Wahadat operating in parts of western and central Afghanistan. Gen Dostum, a military man from the Soviet days, was known to be a moderate and the Indian establishment shuddered at the very thought of Taliban taking over from him. After all, a repeat of a similar takeover in the Kashmir valley can never be ruled out in these incredible times!

Gen Dostum's sudden exit from the battleground on May 24 was preceded by a revolt by one of his commanders, Gen Abdul Malik, in the four provinces of Far-yab, Samangan, Jowzjan and Balkh. Gen Malik quietly switched sides to the Taliban and detained former Herat governor Ismail Khan. It has been alleged that Gen Malik was purchased by the Taliban, on the same lines of the sudden deal between the Mujahideen and Gen Dostum himself which led to the fall of the Najibullah regime in Kabul six years ago.

Once Gen Malik decided to rebel, Gen Dostum's fall has been swift, with troops loyal to him giving up in no time the Baghdis province bordering Iran. His air force chiefs Gen Yousuf Shah and Jamail

SEE-SAW BATTLE IN AFGHANISTAN

RAMESH GOPALAKRISHNAN



left him by flying their jets to airfields controlled by Taliban. Finally, the Uzbek warlord packed his bags, left Mazar-i-Sharif with his family to Ankara and arrived in Ankara, stunning his backers in Russia and the CIS states. Taliban fighters entered Mazar-i-Sharif and Commander Ghulam Rasul took over charge as his troops posed for Western cameramen in front of the historical shrine of Hazrat Ali, one of Islam's holiest places.

Gen Dostum's fall had its ramifications on the power equations in international

might be.

The Pariar sect in the North, having benefited from access to education and to the centre of power at Chennai and by a relatively more enlightened leadership, have become mellowed over a period of time. Also the Vanniars, their immediate antagonists, have become more accommodating thanks to the leadership of such persons as Dr Ramdas.

But the Pallars still rooted to the land, having to encounter the ever arrogant and violent Thevars and led by the fire-spouting but self-serving persons, is out to avenge the past. That is a dangerous mix. It will be quite a while before those in the south see reason.

politics. While Iran kept urging the United Nations' special envoy to Afghanistan, Norbert Hall, to intervene and ensure a broad-based government, Russia went ahead and warned Taliban not to press ahead its offensive. Russian foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov said if the Taliban continued to push its offensive further north, Russian forces stationed at Tajikistan would have to retaliate. Russian analysts were concerned over the possibility of troops loyal to Gen Dostum and Masood being driven up north by the Taliban. Obviously, these armed troops would be itching to fight the Taliban from across the border, a process which would eventually destabilise the region, the analysts feared.

In India, newspaper articles smelt the Taliban victory and started criticising the external affairs department for not keeping open a line of communication with the Islamicist group. Till now, Taliban was taboo for them since it had been backed by Pakistan. Now that the

Taliban was getting closer to the whole of Afghanistan, these newspaper commentators sought to dissociate Taliban from Pakistan and wanted the Indian establishment to get towards direct talks with Taliban! Little did they realise the level of Pakistani involvement in the latest Taliban offensive!

At this juncture, Saudi Arabia threw off its customary caution and became the second country, after Pakistan, to recognise the Taliban clerical administration. This implied, for Indian observers, that this radical Islamicist force might well have been created with Saudi help! This also implied the possibility of further worsening of relations between Saudi Arabia, which follows like Pakistan the Sunni brand of Islam, and Iran, where the favoured religion is Shi'ite Islam. The United States, on its part, decided to watch the Afghan developments from the ringside, despite making noises for ensuring a broad-based government.

The later developments turned out to be more than spectacular. The first sign of resistance to Taliban came on May 29. Taliban forces, who were of Pushtun ethnic stock, faced stiff opposition when they tried to disarm their Uzbek counterparts. Not satisfied with the Taliban offer of the

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from page 27)

And he also offered to create one more transport corporation to be named after a Thevar chieftain. Many including the Dallies cried foul at this all too evident attempt to appease the Thevar sentiments and there was more violence.

Finally he suggested that the transport corporations and districts named after the leaders of the past, including Periyar and Annadurai be reverted to their original names - they will simply be stripped of the names in all such cases and there will never again be the naming of any corporation or district after any leader. No consensus could be evolved even around this most sensible suggestion, whatever Karunanidhi's own motives

(Continued from page 28)

deputy foreign ministership of the country, Gen Malik captured his would-be-boss and the Taliban regime's foreign minister Mullah Mohammed Ghouse, northern administrator Mullah Abdul Razack and a central bank governor. Uzbek troops loyal to Gen Malik simply drove out Taliban militants from Mazar-i-Sharif.

On another front, Tajik fighters loyal to Masood captured two places at Kapisa province, killing more than 100 Taliban men. Masood also managed to take over smaller towns Doshi and Khinjan and cut off supplies to Taliban forces stationed at Pul-i-khumri. Having tasted victory, Masood moved his men south and captured the strategic town of Jabal-us-Siraj, 70 km north of Kabul and at the foot of the Salang pass, which he lost to Taliban a few months ago. The forces loyal to Gen Malik seemed to have made up with Masood and captured two airports at Charikar and Bagram, just 50 to 60 km from Kabul, sending shock waves across the Taliban ranks. Taliban claimed to have repulsed the attack and seized Golbahar, a key town north of Kabul.

The Taliban also suffered severe reverses losing more than 200 fighters in central Afghanistan last month, with the Hizb-i-Wahadat striking back in the Sheikh Ali district. Immediately thereafter, Pakistan came up with an offer of talks between the warring groups, but the anti-Taliban coalition partners rejected the offer. They said they would like to talk to Taliban directly and not to Pakistan, stunning the Taliban's backers in the Pakistani armed forces.

India has a lot of reasons to feel worried about the continuing Afghan battle. There have been allegations from various quarters that the entire recent Taliban offensive has been masterminded by Pakistani military intelligence and that Pakistani soldiers of Pushtun stock have been fighting alongside Taliban militiamen.

More significant is the emerging geopolitics of the Afghan conflict. Northern Afghanistan, which is the scene of confrontation between Gen Malik and the Taliban, is crucial for the route of oil pipelines flowing from central Asia to the Arabian sea via Pakistan, rather than Iran. Pakistan and the United States, thus, have an obvious interest in the oil and gas pipeline projects. By creating and financing the Islamicist student movement of Taliban, Pakistan had seized an opportunity to control the Afghan developments. However, it is now a moot question whether Taliban alone would be able to provide security to the transfer of oil, especially in northern Afghanistan where Uzbek and Tajik troops still hold sway. Hence, it is somewhat inevitable that the Afghan battle will continue. □

Arthur Clarke and His Final Odyssey

Arthur C. Clarke had a bemused look on his face as he raised his eyes from his computer screen. "Something strange happened last night. I didn't receive a single e-mail!" The moment didn't last long for the renowned science-fiction writer. As he sat at his desk running his electric razor over the white stubble on his chin, an electronic beep announced an incoming message, an Associated Press report by Dexter Cruz datelined 23 May said. The report added:

"Ah, I was wrong. Here comes a rather long e-mail," he exclaims during an interview at his home in Colombo. Handicapped by post-polio syndrome, the lingering effects of a disease that had paralysed him for two months in 1959, the 79-year-old Clarke rarely leaves his home in the capital of the Indian Ocean island of Sri Lanka. The writer best known for creating Hal, the malevolent computer at the heart of "2001: A Space Odyssey," spends an hour or so every morning reading e-mail and faxes and browsing the Web.

His computer is his gateway to friends and business colleagues in the outside world - and to worlds beyond. One recent morning, Clarke gazed at an image on his computer screen - one of the sharpest photographs ever taken by the space probe Galileo. He used his computer mouse to trace a straight line visible on Jupiter's ice-covered satellite Europa, speculating that the line could be the handiwork of an alien intelligence.

"Look at that line, it is stretching for more than a hundred miles," said Clarke, who believes Europa is one of the most promising places for life beyond Earth. "If we find any evidence of life, even past life - fossil life - of another world, it would greatly increase space exploration."

Clarke has continued his own fictional explorations. Just when many believed he had ceased a prolific output of both fiction and non-fiction books that began in 1950, the writer this month launched "3001: The Final Odyssey." When his agents first raised the idea of a final odyssey two years ago, Clarke wasn't interested. But the suggestion festered in the

back of his mind, until he was struck by the idea of reviving astronaut Frank Poole, last seen spinning off in space. "3001" is the fourth novel in Clark's series of deep-space travel.

Clarke, who dreamed of space travel before rockets had passed the firecracker stage, was born in the English farming community of Minehead, but has lived in Sri Lanka since 1956. He came here because of his interest in marine diving - the closest he could get to the weightless feeling of space. He rarely gets into the sea now, but a recent weekend found him in his scuba equipment kicking around a swimming pool. A diving instructor kept a close eye on the author.

His "2001: A Space Odyssey," written simultaneously in 1968 as a novel and screenplay with director Stanley Kubrick, was a frightening prophecy of artificial intelligence run amok. One year after "2001" made him a household name in science fiction, Clarke entered the homes of millions of Americans alongside Walter Cronkite, anchoring television coverage of the Apollo mission to the moon.

A framed front page of The New York Times of Monday, July 21, 1969, with the headline "Men Walk on Moon," hangs on the wall near his desk. Scores of books and articles carrying his name are neatly stacked on bookshelves in his study room.

"The whole Space Age, the first flight to the moon, was perhaps 50 years ahead of its time, because of the Cold War. ... The rate of technological development depends not on technology but on politics," Clarke said. Seated in his garden, sipping a steaming cup of tea, Clarke expressed disappointment that man's interest in space has waned from the heady 1960s. But he admitted there has been more space exploration than he ever imagined he would see in his lifetime.

He lives alone on his tropical island now, but he's far from isolated, thanks to his soaring imagination and his computer. He also visits a club every evening for a game of table tennis. Though he has to clutch the table with one hand for support, Clarke is a tough competitor.

"I am a failed recluse," he said. □

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Jaffna Hindu parents seek for son, software engineer, 25, British, suitable educated girl with an awareness of religious and cultural traditions. Send full details. M 945 c/o Tamil Times.

Hindu bachelor professional seeks South Indian lady around 47 for early marriage. Religion no bar. Letters only. Raman 40A High Street, Hounslow, Middx. TW3 1NW.

Tamil Hindu parents seek professional partner for son, 29, Canadian Citizen, Computer Engineer in good Canadian employment. Send details. M 947 c/o Tamil Times.

Hindu parents seek vegetarian bride under 30 for professional son and groom, 30-35 for daughter in good employment. Please send photo, horoscope, details. M 948 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek bride not below 5'2" preferably below 30 for son, doctor in USA, 37. Please send photo, horoscope with details, M 949 c/o Tamil Times.

JAFFNA Hindu brother seeks groom for good looking sister, 36, IAB(UK), Accounts Assistant in Colombo, owns flat, willing to migrate. Send details. M 950 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu elders seek partner for male California professional, civil engineer, 46, divorcee, no encumbrances, US permanent resident, religion no bar. Box 2226, Oxnard, CA 93034, USA.

Ceylon Tamil parents seek partner for daughter, 28, fair, pretty, Canadian citizen, accountant, permanently employed, innocent divorcee. Send details. M 952 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu brothers seek groom in employment for sister, 30, 5'5", fair, working in UK, Mars afflicted. Send horoscope, details. M 953 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu sister seeks professional bride for brother, civil engineer, 38, British citizen. Please send photo, details. M 954 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu mother seeks

bride in UK preferably below 39 for working citizen. Send photo, horoscope. M 955 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu brother seeks groom for good looking sister, 36, IAB(UK), Accounts Assistant in Colombo, owns flat, willing to migrate. Send details. M 950 c/o Tamil Times.

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Anoja daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Appiah Balasundaram of 404 Pond View Drive, Moorestown, New Jersey, USA and **Julian son of Mr. & Mrs. Russ Madison** on 24th May 1997 at The Four Seasons Hotel, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Dr. Ravi Shankar son of Dr. and Mrs. M. Ramanathan of 92 Hitchings Way, Reigate, Surrey and **Aparna daughter of the late Mr. S. Kadirkamanathan and Mrs. Vidya Kadirkamanathan** of 26 Marsh Hall, Wembley, Middx. on 25th May 1997 at Thurrock Civic Hall, Blackshots Lane, Grays Essex.

IN MEMORIAM



In loving memory of **Mrs. Ranjini Geetanjali Thirunavukarasu** on the first anniversary of her passing away on 24th May 1996.

Sadly missed and lovingly remembered by her husband Thirunavukarasu; children Poornima and Pradeep; father Mahalingam; mother-in-law Mrs. P. Ponnuthurai; sisters Mrs. Lalitha Dilkushi Karunakaran and Priyadarshini Damayanthi; brothers Premkumar, Mohankumar, Ranjittkumar, Nimalkumar and Tilakumar; brothers-in-law Karuna-

karan and Balanathan; sisters-in-law Kamalarani, Vijayalaxmi, Nirmala, Yasothara, Nalini, Kamaladevi and Sugirthadevi. - M. Ranjittkumar, 173 Kempton Road, Eastham, London E6 2PU. Tel: 0181 471 9311.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

July 1 Feast of St. Oliver; Karthigai.

July 2 Pirathosam; Feast of Our Lady of Madhu in Sri Lanka.

July 3 Feast of St. Thomas.

July 4 Amavasai; Sri Lanka Kataragama Flag Hoisting Ceremony.

July 5 (a) South London Tamil Welfare Group (SLTWG) drop in John Innes Youth Centre. Tel: 0181 545 3313.

July 5 (b) 6.00pm Jaffna Hindu College OBA (UK) AGM, Dinner & Entertainment at St. Augustine Church Hall, East Lane, Wembley, Middx. Tel: 0181 952 1147.

July 5 (c) 11.00am Kankesan-turai Nadeswara College OSA (UK) Open Day at Wembley

High School, East Lane, Wembley, Middx. Tel: 0181 958 9867.

July 8 Sathurthi.

July 10 Shashdi.

July 11 Aani Uththiram; Feast of St. Benedict.

July 12 SLTWG Trip to Stratford-upon-Avon. Tel: 0181 545 3313.

July 14 Feast of St. Carmillus.

July 16 Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel; Eekathasi.

July 17 Pirathosam.

July 19 Jaffna Central Vs St. Johns Big Match and Open Day Fun Fair at Northwick Park Sports Centre, The Fairway, Wembley, Middx. Tel: 0181 551 2183.

July 20 SLTWG trip to Walsingham Church. Tel: 0181 545 3313.

July 21 Feast of St. Lawrence.

July 23 Sankadahara Sathurthi.

July 26 Feast of St. Anne.

July 28 Karthigai.

July 30 Eekathasi.

July 31 Pirathosam.

Sixth Death Anniversary



22nd June 1997
 In Ever Loving Memory
 of

Balasubramaniam Sivagananathan

on the sixth anniversary of his passing away on 22.6.91.

Remembered with love and affection by his step mother Mrs. Rajaletchumy Balasubramaniam; wife Kamala; brothers Dr. Sivaloganathan, Thirunavukarasu, Radhakrishnan and Sriharan; sisters Mrs. Gowri Pathmanathan, Mrs. Bhagawathy, Mohanadas, Mrs. Mangayarkkarsi Jetheendran and Mrs. Jayanthi Kumaranayagam. - 22 Oakwood Drive, St. Albans, Herts. Tel: 01727 853331.

Fourth Death Anniversary



10th June 1997
In Ever Loving Memory
of

**Kanagambihai
Ragunathan**

May the Good Lord
Sathia Sai Baba
Bless and keep you
In His Loving Care

Fondly remembered by your loving husband
Ragu, son Sri, daughter-in-law Saku, grandson
Vishva. - 173 Mammoth Hall Trail, Scarborough,
Ontario M1B 1P8, Canada.

AUSTRALIAN NEWSLETTER

The Sydney University Tamil Society established in 1991 started publishing a bilingual quarterly magazine titled 'Kalappai' in 1994. This was done in order to encourage Tamil writers and to provide a standard magazine for readers. Kalappai has now successfully completed three years of publication and to celebrate, a Literary Forum is being planned to assess its impact on the readers and the community at large. The 13th issue of the magazine will be released at this forum which will be held at the Homebush Primary School Hall on Saturday, 19th July 1997 at 6 p.m.

The Kalappai Publications sub-committee took a bold step early this year with the publication of the Tamil Yellow Guide to facilitate communication within the community by providing a guide of all Tamil business, service or community organisations in New South Wales. The first edition of the guide was a tremendous success and most of the copies were distributed within two weeks of release. It is proposed to produce a second expanded edition for 1998/99 with a lot more information.

Hindu Temple in Canberra: Canberra, the Federal Capital of Australia gained its first Hindu Temple on 1st June 1997. The Maha Kumbhabhishekam of the Sri Vishnu Siva Mandir was preceded by several days of pujas and homams performed by priests from Sydney and India. The opening cere-

mony was performed by the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. John Howard, who poured holy water on the Gopuram of the Mandir. Aarthi was performed by the ACT Chief Minister, Mrs. Kate Carnell and this was followed by the welcome address by the Chairman of the Mandir Society, Mr. Krishan Aggarwal. Speeches were made by the Prime Minister, ACT Chief Minister and India's High Commissioner in Australia Mr. G. Parthasarathy.

The Prime Minister said that the Canberra Hindu Temple was a symbol of Australia's deep rooted racial and religious tolerance. Mr. Parthasarathy emphasised the strong links between Australia and India.

Melbourne Hindu Temple: The twin Raja Gopurams of the Sri Siva Vishnu Temple at Carrum Downs in Melbourne were completed recently and the Kumbhabhishekam was held on 25th May 1997. A large gathering of devotees witnessed this unique ceremony performed by several priests. Although there are several temples all over Australia, this is the only one which has completed the building of twin Raja Gopurams.

Music Concert: The veteran play back singer P. Susheela entertained a packed audience at the Bankstown Town Hall, Sydney on Sunday 25th May 1997. She was accompanied by T.M.S. Balaraj, son of the legendary T.M. Sounderarajan and Sandaya Rekha.

Leinall Launches Book of Poems

Seventeen year old Leinalla daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Balasubramaniam of Red-

bridge, Ilford, Essex has launched a book of poems entitled 'Thinking in Dreams' published by Minerva Press of Knightsbridge, London.

Leinalla was educated at Eastcourt Independent School in Goodmayes from the age of four and now attends the City of London School for Girls where she is doing her A levels. Last year she obtained nine A's in her O levels, which included A* in her favourite subjects English and English literature. Her ambition is to be a poet, writer and lyricist. She has written songs for the composer Danisi Kirst. She enjoys playing the guitar. Her father Bala hails from Ipoh in Malaysia and her mother Sarojini is from Mauritius.

Copies of her book can be bought for £3.99 from WH Smith ISBN No 1 86106 603 1 or from her at 203 Redbridge Lane East, Redbridge, Ilford, Essex IG4 5DF. TEL: 0181 551 6432 or 0181 472 0256.

Wanted Mirudangam & Violin Teachers

British Association of Tamil Schools needs a qualified Mirudangam and Violin teacher with a sound knowledge of Tamil and a minimum of 10 years experience in accompanying Bharatha Natya dancers and proven ability to compose music for Bharatha Natyam. Basic salary £8000 per annum plus benefits. Closing date for written applications to Mr. K. Sivagurunathapillai, Chairman, B.A.T.S., 18 St. Michael Close, Bickley, Kent, BR1 2DX by 12th July 1997.

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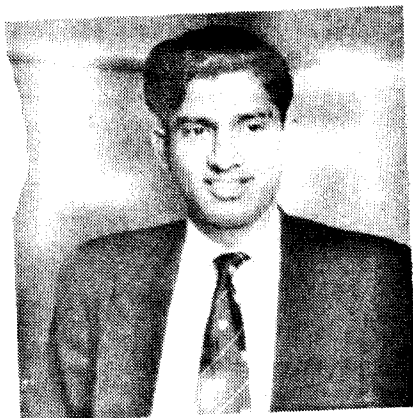
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Dr. S. Krishnaswami



Born: 27 June 1928 Died: 12 June 1996

An year ago on 12th June 1996 Dr. Krishnaswami found Eternal Peace in the hands of the Almighty. We, the near and dear ones and the many friends pray that his Soul rests in Peace.

Doctor, as he came to be affectionately called, hailed from a well known family in Point Pedro and was the eldest son of Mr. M.K. and Mrs. Sangarapillai, a famous lawyer from the Jaffna bar, (Advocate Sangarapillai of Pulofy). He had his early education at St. Patrick's College, Jaffna and later at Hartley College, Point Pedro from where he entered the University. At the University of Ceylon he obtained his Honours degree in Physics. After graduation he took up teaching at Parameswara College and served that institution with great devotion.

An Indian Government Cultural Scholarship took him to the University of Calcutta, where he had the distinction of studying under world famous scientists like Dr. Meghnad Saha and Dr. Satyen Bose. In 1952 he obtained the M.Sc. and had the unique distinction of being awarded the Gold Medal for the high academic excellence attained by him. His research interests took him to the University of Manchester from where he moved to the University of Durham along with his supervisor, Dr. A.W. Wolfendale and in July 1959 he was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy in Pure Science, specialising in Nuclear Physics. On his return to Sri Lanka he was appointed Head of the Department of Physics at Jaffna College and served the department with great enthusiasm. It was during this period that he got married to Miss Jeyadevi Thillainathan, but very soon, they both went their separate ways.

An offer from the University of Singapore took him to that institution in 1965. He spent the greater part of his life there till his retirement from the post of Associate Professor in 1988. A great physicist and academician that he was, he sponsored several young and talented scholars to pursue their academic interests.

Retired life to him meant a period of reflection and meditation and for such a life, he chose to reside in Madras from where he pursued his interests in Indian Philosophy and Religion. A very caring and compassionate person that he was, he

took great care to help, guide and advise any one who sought his assistance or guidance. All those who came into contact with him, will remember him for his kindness and compassion. It is hard to find people with such sterling qualities and the ones that were characteristic of him, but that is the Law of Life and we all have to accept God's will.

He leaves behind three sisters and four brothers.

S. Sara.

Dance Debut in Paris



The Bharata Natya Arangetram of Niruba and Nirujah, disciples of Smt Bhavany Thamotherampillai, director of Brahadewara Natyalayam and daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Balachandran of Paris took place at the Theatre de Boulogne Billancourt in Paris, France.

Smt Bhavany is a disciple of Smt Neila Sathyalangam, a well known exponent and teacher from Kalakshetra, Adayar, Madras who is presently in Singapore. Bhavany has produced many students to Arangetram level both in Sri Lanka and France.

Niruba and Nirujah started the evening's performance with Boomanjali followed by 'Narthana Vinayagar' in Nattai Ragam. The Varnam 'Velanai Vava' in Bairavi Ragam was the highlight of the first half of the programme.

After the interval the 'The Krishna Leela Thavangani' in Hindola Ragam and the Thillana in Amirthavarshani Ragam were well performed by the sisters. The Chief Guest, The Mayor of St. Denis, Conseiller General, M. Didier Paillard paid tribute to the young dancers and their dedicated teacher.

The orchestra consisting of Sri Lankan and French artistes was:- Nattuvangam: Smt Bhavany Thamotherampillai, Vocal: Smt Ambika Thamotheram and Smt Catherine Zalay, Miruthangam: Sri Muthu Sivarajah, Violin: Sri M. Devarajah, Flute: Sri Jean Paul Auboux, and Thambura: Smt Jenifer Walpole.

Hartley College P.P.A. (U.K. Branch)

The following were elected to the Executive Committee at the A.G.M. & Dinner held on 9th November 1996. **President:** Mr. V. Santhalingam, **Vice President:** Mr. A. Easwaramohan, **Secretary:** Mr. M. Kulasingam, **Treasurer:** Mr. T. Rajkumar, **Sports Secretary:** Mr. T. Arulnanthy, **Committee:** Messers S. Balasingam, S. Murare, V. Paramaguru, R. Selvarajan, N. Sivarajah & Dr. R. Mylvaganam.

The following were appointed to the Board of Trustees:- **Chairman:** Dr. R. Selvackadunco, **Secretary:** Mr. R. Raveendralingam, **Treasurer:** Mr. S. Sivakumaran.

Mr. S. Shanmuganathan, Vice President of the Colombo Branch and Mr. M. Atputhanathan, former teacher of the college were Guests of Honour.

There was a special message from the Hon. Speaker of the Sri Lankan Parliament Mr. K.B. Ratnayake, a past pupil of Hartley.

Radio Asia Plans Tamil TV



Radio Asia - a broadcasting combine of experienced professionals in the same field have finalised arrangements to launch their European Tamil TV by satellite to thousands of Tamils living in UK, France, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands and other Western European States. Radio Asia S.A. Incorporated based in France, is already broadcasting a 24-hour Tamil Radio programme by satellite named 'Tamil Oli' from January this year reaching thousands of homes across five European states. The programme content is non-political and includes hourly news headlines with a major 45 minute News programme at 7.30 p.m. (GMT) covering World News, Indian, Tamil Nadu & Sri Lankan News with direct despatches from their correspondents.

The feather in the cap of this infant Radio Station is the agreement made with the BBC World Service Radio to take off the air and relay simultaneously the Tamil Osai - the popular half hour programme produced and broadcast by the BBC for more than 50 years, intended and targeted to Tamil listeners in the Indian subcontinent and beyond. It has also been agreed that the BBC Tamil Programme, Tamil Osai will be broadcast in Radio Asia's Tamil Oli daily for the benefit of those Tamil listeners now living in Europe.

Radio Asia will launch their Tamil TV named TAMIL OZHI (meaning light) on 23rd June 1997. The TV satellite covers the same western states. Initially the programmes will be supplied by India's major TV Channel - the Sun TV whose programmes are at present the craze of the Tamil viewers in India.

Radio Asia is planning a grand launch event in its Paris Headquarters to celebrate the birth of Tamil TV in Europe.

Satellite details are: EUTEL SAT II F 6 HOT BIRD I positioned 13 degrees East.

For further details please contact Mr. Wimal Sockanathan, 727B London Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 6AU. Tel: 0181 689 7503; Fax: 0181 683 2645; Mobile: 0802 507 115; E-Mail: Wimalsock@aol.com.

Sabaratham Sabanathan



Saba as his friends, of whom he had many, called him, the son of Sabaratnam and Maheswary was born in Jaffna, Sri Lanka in the same hospital in which his eldest daughter was born, and where he saved her life, but that is another story. He grew up as the second in a family of nine. Once he climbed a coconut tree much against the request of his father and fell down. But that was Saba, after all you don't know what you can do until you try.

He studied at Velanai Central and Jaffna Central Colleges and passed his A-levels very well despite being ill at the time, demonstrating the determination that would be with him throughout his life. It allowed him to enter Peradeniya Campus medical school, the youngest in his batch. Here he worked very hard and consistently with such organisation, that he was able to go to the beach and relax the day before the examination, which is exactly not the practice for medical students. But all his work was rewarded on 1st September 1972, when he passed the final MBBS with first class honours with distinctions in Anatomy, Forensic Medicine and Surgery.

An equally proud if not a prouder moment was in 1974, when Saba married Thirumani, the girl he loved. In September 1975, came their first daughter, Anusa. Saba worked very hard, he never considered doing anything less than his full ability. He loved what he did and the enjoyment and pride that he drew from medicine for the rest of his life. It was an enjoyment that he passed on to his colleagues, patients and his daughters.

Saba worked at the Jaffna & Colombo General Hospitals before going over to England in March 1977. He had worked in many hospitals before going over to Bradford Royal Infirmary. During this time, he gained many qualifications, F.R.C.S.(Eng), F.R.C.S.(Edin), F.I.C.A. and a D.M. from the University of Nottingham. He achieved his F.R.C.S.(Eng) in May 1980, the same time that his second daughter Anetha was born. He published 150 articles in various leading journals, to mention a few: The

Annals of Thoracic Surgery, the Western Medical Journal, the British Journal of Hospital Medicine, the European Journal of Cardiothoracic Surgery, the Journal of Cardiovascular Surgery. Saba was the guest reviewer to several journals, one of which was the Annals of Thoracic Surgery. He had also contributed six chapters in various surgical and medical text books and had written a local book 'A Guide to Adult Lung Transplantation'. It would be safe to say that he had many ideas for the future.

Saba used to say that he did not go looking for subjects to write about, he was not as one doctor said a journalist. He was simply a man who observed and in the process saw how it could be done better, or differently or simply notice the unusual. Perhaps many others observe but Saba would go on to think about it and test his thoughts. He seized the opportunities, he could do no less. For him it was completely natural, to think, not just accept. He would often ask someone who was explaining something, 'why', and as anyone with young children will know, this is one of the most difficult questions to be asked. He would see it but he wanted others to understand totally the subject. It was this type of thinking that led him to many great achievements. To name but a few; he invented and developed continuous extra-pleural intercostal analgesia, simply the method of pain relief in thoracic surgery, as testified by the fact that it is used in many hospitals and of course eight clinical trials. He introduced tissue adhesive into thoracic surgery. He was a world expert in stenting airways. He invented a new and better treatment for the repair of Bronchopleural fistulae and a way to revascularise stumps to prevent bronchopleural fistulae and a method of stomach lengthening, necessary for the successful surgical treatment of oesophageal cancer. He brought single lung transplantation to Bradford and co-invented a rib punch to prevent pain after thoracoscopic surgery. These are just a few and in the pipe line was an endoscopic volume reduction surgery for the treatment of emphysema.

His priority was the patient. He believed that if surgery was possible and the patient would benefit, then do it. He operated on many patients who would be considered unfit for surgery by most doctors. But he would not ignore other people's ideas and views. He worked as part of a team and made every member feel involved including the patient. He was recognised for his endeavours by the Royal College of Surgeons, who gave him a Huntarian professorship of Surgery. He was appointed one of the new examiners of the Royal College of Surgeons and was looking forward to it. One of his proud moments was when the former P.M., John Major congratulated him when presenting the Daily Star Gold Award. He also met the then Minister of Health, Mrs. Bottomley as a finalist in the 1992 Doctor of the Year Award. His name was included in the Marquis Who's Who in the World 1997, something that he was proud of. He was highly pleased when he published two papers with his eldest daughter. Saba had

also just been invited to become a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine.

Saba had the ability to weigh up arguments fairly and present his view and this helped with his work on the Medical Appeals Tribunal. He was not soft despite the appearance he gave. When he believed in something or someone, he put forward his views strongly. There were not many occasions when this was demonstrated. Saba managed to encourage others to see his point of view despite their best efforts. He never stopped learning whether with work or life. He was always looking to the next horizon and what it would offer. He was happy when he was invited to become a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the New York Academy of Science and a Fellow of the International College of Angiology.

Saba believed in sharing, as those who worked with him knew. He was generous with his knowledge, friendship and 'fame'. A lot of people were surprised by his modesty as he never 'threw his weight about'. He enjoyed teaching and passing on what he had learned. Anytime, anyone, everyone could ask a question from him and get a complete explanation. If he did not know he would look it up and explain. He co-founded the Charity 'Lungs for Life', through which thousands of pounds have been raised to buy equipment for the Bradford Royal Infirmary.

To mark his achievements as represented only by his work, would be to under estimate a most remarkable man. He left behind many people who were blessed by his advice and friendship, it is through these people that he will live on. While Saba's death is a great loss to medicine and his friends, the greatest loss is to his family. Saba was a great father and a wonderful husband, he always had the strength of his family behind him. We will miss him, and we will always remember.

Anusa Sabanathan,
Medical Student at King's College London.

O.B.E. for Shanmugam



Mr. S. Shanmugam was awarded the O.B.E. in the recent birthday honours of Her Majesty, the Queen, in recognition of his 29 years of meritorious service in the Department of Transport. He retired as Deputy Head of the Bridges Engineering section on 16.6.97 and was responsible for the Design and Assessment of Tunnels and Bridges including long span cable stayed and suspension bridges.

Mr. & Mrs. Shanmugam hail from Analtivu, Jaffna and have three children. We wish them several years of happy retired life.

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- ★ கொழும்புக்கு அர்ப்பணம் மிகுந்த உன்னத சேவை. (16 தினங்கள்)
- ★ தேயிலைப் பெட்டிகளிலிருந்து, முழு அளவிலான தனிப்பட்ட பொருள்கள் வரை.
- ★ கார், மற்றும் 20 அடி, 40 அடி முழு வர்த்தக சரக்குகளுக்கு விசேட கட்டணம்.
- ★ மின்சார உட்பத்தி யந்திரம், யந்திர வகைகள், உபகரணங்கள்.
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