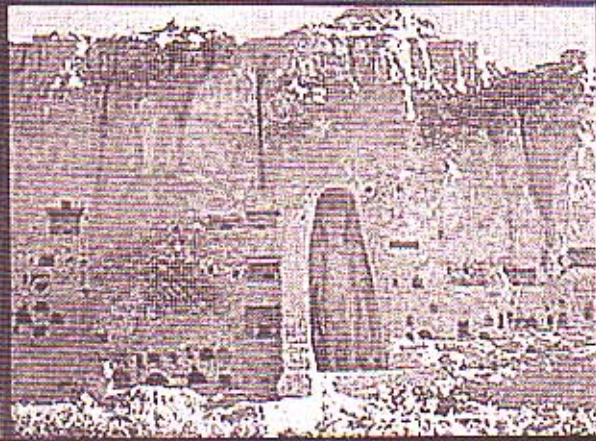


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of what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it."*

-Voltaire

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The Challenge of Peace

The widely anticipated proscription of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was confirmed by the British parliament on 14 March. Whatever views one may have in regard to the merit of the decision, the reality that has to be recognised is that, until a legal challenge by way of an appeal succeeds or the British Minister for Home Affairs decides to remove the LTTE from the list of proscribed organisations, the proscription will remain in force.

Certainly the British ban is a severe blow to the LTTE and particularly to its international image, although it will have limited impact on the ground conditions back in Sri Lanka.

Predictably the LTTE is deeply disappointed. It said that the ban would "adversely affect Tamil interests and severely undermine the current peace initiatives" and encourage the Sri Lankan government to be "more uncompromising, intransigent and to adopt a military path". However, the LTTE "would continue with the peace process and cooperate with the Norwegian facilitatory efforts."

The government of Sri Lanka "saluted the British government for having acted wisely and fairly" in banning the LTTE. However, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister said that the British decision to ban the LTTE should not be a matter of gloating or exultation, or an occasion for the manifestation of triumphalism by the Sinhalese people, nor should it be treated as a blow aimed by the British Government at the Tamil people. He also appealed to the LTTE to "continue to remain engaged in the peace process that is now ongoing."

What is promising in the post-ban situation is that the LTTE has not been provoked to abandoning its ceasefire. On the contrary, despite the ban, the LTTE has said that it would continue to be engaged in the ongoing peace process. The LTTE has held to its unilateral ceasefire month after month. The hope is that the LTTE has made a qualitative transition in its strategy and it will continue to be in the "ceasefire mode" and avoid retreating into the "fighting mode". Although no official ceasefire has been declared by government forces, there has been a substantial level of de-escalation on the battlefield where no large-scale operations have been undertaken in recent times.

Now that its much desired proscription of the LTTE in Britain has been achieved, the primary responsibility for taking the peace process forward rests fairly and squarely on the Sri Lankan government. The question is whether the government is ready and able to engage in detailed negotiations with the LTTE on a set of proposals that will lead to a settlement of the conflict. The only context in which it can seek to deliver such a prospect is when it has not only ensured the support of its constituency, but also has mobilised a consensus with other wider sections in the south of the country. Taking account of its own weak numerical strength in the country's parliament, in particular it must seek to secure the support of the main opposition party, the United National Party. As things stand, the relations between the governing party and opposition UNP are very antagonistic and hostile and they are at each other's throat on every conceivable subject. These parties should rise above partisan, parochial and personal considerations and forge a common approach on the package of proposals for discussions between the government and the LTTE. Still better would be for the government to consider the prospect of constituting a bipartisan negotiating team to engage in peace talks with the LTTE.

There is much evidence that the Norwegian facilitated peace process is still on track with its special envoy Erik Solheim making his frequent trips between Oslo-Colombo-London-New Delhi having discussions with the interested parties. The strong message contained in the recent speech made by the American Ambassador in Jaffna is indicative of the political and diplomatic pressure that is being exerted in regard to a negotiated political solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka. A challenge is facing the people of Sri Lanka, its political elite and particularly the government, the UNP and the LTTE. It is the Challenge of Peace making. Will they respond to this challenge positively and with responsibility is the question. If they do not, posterity will not forgive them.

LTTE Ban Approved By UK Parliament

15 March – The British House of Commons on 14 March approved, 396 MPs voting for with 17 against, the list of organisations recommended by the Home Affairs Minister Mr Jack Straw to be proscribed under the Terrorism Act 2000.

On 28 February, the Minister placed before parliament for approval after debate the Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscribed Organisations) (Amendment) Order 2001 recommending the proscription of a total of 21 international organisations operating in the United Kingdom.

Specific offences relating to membership, support for and funding of a proscribed organisation are included in

the new the Terrorism Act, enacted last year.

Home Secretary Jack Straw announced the list of organisations on 28 February stating that he was satisfied that they were involved in terrorism.

Included in the list are the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which has its international secretariat in London. The following details about the LTTE are given in the list:

Aims: The LTTE is a terrorist group fighting for a separate Tamil state in the North and East of Sri Lanka.

History: The LTTE has been fighting since 1983. More than 60,000 people on all sides have been killed in the conflict.

Attacks: The LTTE has mounted both a military assault and a terrorist campaign, the latter mainly in Colombo. Attacks are mostly targeted against Sri Lankan military and leading politicians using suicide bombers. Attempts to assassinate the Sri Lankan President in late 1999 and early 2000 were attributed to the LTTE by the media and the Sri Lankan authorities.

Attacks on UK or Western interests: The LTTE has never targeted Western interests directly, though Westerners have been injured as a result of LTTE attacks in Sri Lanka. The LTTE's only attack outside Sri Lanka was the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 in response to India's military support for Sri Lanka.

Representation/activities in the UK: The LTTE's International Secretariat is based in the UK, and is responsible for the group's press releases. The UK is also a source of funds for the LTTE. ●

“Ban Will Affect Tamil Interests”

- Anton Balasingham

28 February - Britain's decision to include the LTTE on the list of proscribed terrorist organizations “will impose severe restraints” on the Norwegian initiative, the LTTE said on 28 February, the day on which the British Home Affairs Minister announced a list of 21 proscribed organisations.

The ban will “adversely affect Tamil interests and severely undermine the current peace initiatives” and would “encourage the repressive Sri Lankan regime to be more uncompromising, intransigent and to adopt a military path of State violence, terrorism and war”, the London based LTTE's chief negotiator Mr Anton Balasingham said in a statement. However, the LTTE said that “irrespective of the British ban the Tamil Tigers would continue with the peace process and co-operate with the Norwegian facilitatory efforts.”

The full text of the statement made by Mr Anton Balasingham issued in the form of a press release is follows:

“The British decision to include the

LTTE on the list of proscribed terrorist organisations will impose severe restraints on the current peace initiatives undertaken by the Norwegian Government to resolve the civil war in Sri Lanka. So declared Mr. Anton Balasingham, chief negotiator and political advisor of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) commenting on the inclusion of his political movement on the list of proscribed organisations announced by the Home Secretary Jack Straw in the British Parliament this afternoon.

“It is regrettable that our liberation movement, the authentic representative organisation of the Sri Lankan Tamils, which has been fighting for the political rights of our people for the last 25 years, is included on the list of proscribed organisations in Britain. It is a sad day for the Anglo-Tamil relations. The Tamil people, who have been collectively campaigning as a single voice against the proposed ban will be seriously disappointed by the British deci-

sion. The proscription will adversely affect the Tamil interests and severely undermine the current peace initiatives. Furthermore, the British decision will encourage the repressive Sri Lankan regime to be more uncompromising, intransigent and to adopt a military path of State violence, terrorism and war.

“The decision to include the Tamil Tigers in the proscribed list was taken primarily on the logical criteria of the legislation which provides a wider definition of terrorism to include all forms of legitimate armed political struggles for freedom and dignity. The British decision makers have paid scant regard to the lengthy and complex history of the Tamil political struggle, the ugly history of the genocidal mode of State repression and the glorious history of armed resistance against repression and gross violations of human rights. The British ban of the LTTE is a triumph for Buddhist racism and fascism and a severe blow to peace and justice.

“Irrespective of the British ban the Tamil Tigers would continue with the peace process and co-operate with the Norwegian facilitatory efforts. “The peace initiatives depend precariously on the leniency or the harshness in which this draconian legislation will be implemented by the law enforcing agencies in Britain.” ●

"LTTE Ban - Not a Time For Triumphalism"

- Foreign Minister

March 2 - The British decision to ban the LTTE should not be a matter of gloating or exultation, or an occasion for the manifestation of triumphalism by the Sinhalese people, nor should it be treated as a blow aimed by the British Government at the Tamil People, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Mr Lakshman Kadirgamar said at a press conference in Colombo on 2 March.

The Minister said that "the British Government has taken the only decision it could possibly have taken as a responsible, law abiding member of the international community, within the terms of its own law, and also in terms of the two International Conventions, the Convention on the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings of 1997 and the Convention on the Suppression of Terrorist Financing of 1999, both of which the British Government has signed. The British Government, together with a number of other Governments, including the Government of Sri Lanka, was in the forefront of the campaign to have international legislative measures put in place to combat international terrorism. The Government of the United Kingdom has made, within its purview, a sovereign decision. It is not for me, or for anybody, to thank the British Government for what it has done. One sovereign does not thank another sovereign for acting in terms of its own law."

Denying news reports that he was going to the United Kingdom to thank the British Government for proscribing the LTTE as "utterly and totally unfounded," the Minister said, "I have absolutely no intention of doing any such thing. In fact, it would be inappropriate, unnecessary, undignified, indeed foolish, for me to go on a venture of that kind. The British Government has not given us a gift or granted us a favour." However, he saluted the British

Government for having acted wisely and fairly in that manner in respect of its own law.

Addressing the Sinhala people, the Minister said, "I wish to address a word to the Sinhala people of our country. I say to the Sinhala people, with great respect, do not treat this event, the proscription of the LTTE, as a matter of gloating or exultation or an occasion for the manifestation of triumphalism. All sections of moderate people in Sri Lanka will find relief and satisfaction that the law of another country where the LTTE was, unfortunately, operating with license has brought the LTTE to heel. That is as it should be. But it would be a great mistake, and I say it again with respect to the Sinhala people, to use this as an occasion for glorification. Look at it rather as the end of one chapter, hopefully, the violent chapter of our recent history, and the opening of another chapter, which might presage peace and, therefore, prosperity for our people. I would put it like this: one battle has been won but the biggest battle is yet to be fought, and that is the battle for a just and durable peace."

Addressing the Tamil people, the Minister said, "To the Tamil people I would say, with equal respect, please do not treat this proscription as a blow aimed by the British Government at the Tamil people. It is no such thing. As I said a moment ago, the British Government is merely applying the law of its land and that law does not draw any distinction between the organizations against, or in respect of, who the law may have to be enforced. The law itself is a perfectly neutral instrument. It contains a definition of terrorism, which is now universally accepted. In proscribing a particular organization, be it the LTTE or be it a Muslim or-

ganisation or be it any other type of organization, the British Government is certainly not aiming a blow at any section of the people of the country where that organization operates. It will be unrealistic for the Tamil people to look at the matter realistically, and ask themselves has not the time come, finally, when they should say to the LTTE "turn over a new leaf, enough of violence, and let us join hands with other moderate, sensible people in the rest of Sri Lanka who earnestly desire peace".

To the LTTE the Minister had this message: "I would say to the LTTE itself, as their spokesman has said, yes, this proscription is indeed a blow. But the LTTE cannot objectively be heard to complain about that because the LTTE knows very well what the definition of terrorism is in the UK Act. The UK Act, as I said a moment ago, is not concerned with the worthiness of a cause. It passes no judgement at all, one way or another, on whether a cause is a good cause or not. What the law does is to prohibit violent activity in pursuit of any cause whatsoever. So I say to the LTTE, let us look at it like this: the proscription has occurred, but that has nothing whatever to do with the peace process that is going on. In the first place, the British Government is not a party to the peace process. The peace process involves the Government of Sri Lanka, the LTTE and the Government of Norway. It is, if I may say so, not a sound argument for the LTTE to say that if the British Government bans it then it might pull out of the peace process. There is no logical connection at all between the proscription and the peace process. I am confident that the LTTE will ultimately see this matter in the correct light; that it will realize that if it is keen on peace, as the Government of Sri Lanka is, then the LTTE will continue to remain engaged in the process that is now ongoing. So that is my appeal to the LTTE. What I am saying is that the Government of Sri Lanka is determined to go on with the peace process and bring it to a successful conclusion for the benefit of all the people. I urge the LTTE to look at it in that way."

Gap Between LTTE And Govt Narrowing

March 6 - The differences between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil Tigers over holding peace talks to end the ethnic war were narrowing, raising hopes that the two sides may meet soon after a gap of five years. "The way things are going, I feel that gaps are indeed narrowing," Erik Solhiem told the media.

"In a situation like this you can't have an 'I do or I don't' answer. But I feel that in the coming months, the two will be thinking seriously about a meeting," Solhiem said.

After arriving in Colombo on 4 March, Solheim met President Chandrika Kumaratunga, top opposition leader

Ranil Wickremesinghe of the United National Party, constitutional affairs minister G.L. Peiris and Indian High Commissioner Gopalkrishna Gandhi on 5 March.

Solhiem declined to give a time for the proposed talks between the government and the LTTE. Earlier, a spokesman for the Norwegian embassy called the talks constructive.

"The meeting was constructive, and we hope to bring the two parties together," Tomas Stangeland, the embassy spokesman, said about the Solhiem-Kumaratunga meeting.

Solheim has been trying for more than a year to narrow the differences

between the LTTE and the government to bring the two sides back to the negotiating table. The last peace talks were held five years ago, commencing shortly after Kumaratunga's Peoples Alliance coalition came to power in August 1994 which broke down in April 1995 when the LTTE pulled out of the talks and resumed armed hostilities.

Solheim, left Colombo on Tuesday 6 March for talks with a London-based LTTE's chief negotiator and advisor Anton Balasingham in a bid to push forward the island's peace process.

The Tigers had earlier warned they would pull out of talks if Britain proscribed them under the new anti-terrorism laws. However, in a statement following the ban the LTTE said that although there were now constraints imposed on them they were committed to remaining in the peace process and were supportive of Norway's efforts. ●

Daughter Saw Father Being Beaten and Strangled

March 7 - "I saw the soldiers beating up my father with a club and he cried out in pain. My brother and I cried when we saw this. Our father told us that he was being taken to the Tharapuram Navy camp and asked us to come there in the morning. The soldiers then took him away. We saw our father being walked down the street later around 10.30 p.m." said Anusiya Uthayakumar, 16, the daughter of the man who was allegedly beaten and strangled to death by Navy personnel who arrested him on the night of February 28, in her evidence in the Mannar Magistrates Court on 7 March.

Answering a question by Inspector of Police (Mannar crime branch) S. Abeyawardena during her evidence, Anusiya said that she also saw the naval ratings strangling her father while they were beating him up.

In their evidence before the Magistrate earlier on 5 March V.E. Raveendra S. Harischandra, 23, the sub-lieutenant from the Tharapuram Navy camp in Mannar and three ratings who went with him to arrest Uthayakumar on the night of 28 February had claimed that they did not assault him at all during the arrest or questioning.

The sub lieutenant said in his evidence that Uthayakumar was arrested on information provided by three informants. He claimed that there was no electricity in the Tharapuram Navy camp when they took Uthayakumar there for questioning and that he attempted to escape when the lamp in the room where they were interrogating him went out. However, according to the sub-lieutenant, he and naval rating K.A.S. Prasad Kumara, 22, of Matale had overpowered Uthayakumar and brought him back to the room where he had suddenly collapsed, frothing from a corner of his mouth.

"Suspecting that Uthayakumar was suffering from a disease, we took him to the hospital where he was pronounced dead," the Navy officer said, adding that they had not assaulted Uthayakumar even when his alleged escape bid was foiled. The sub-lieutenant's statement was corroborated by the three naval ratings who gave evidence.

However, the District Medical Officer for Mannar, Dr. G. Somasekeram, who examined the body of Uthayakumar states in his medical legal report submitted to the courts on 2 March "I am of the opinion the death would have

occurred due to Hypoxia following strangulation of the neck". He noted that there was muscle and bone damage in Uthayakumar's neck and bleeding into muscle. His report says that there was bleeding into the mouth and the nostrils.

Continuing her evidence in court, Uthayakumar's daughter Anusiya said "We are from Atchuvely in Jaffna. We were displaced due to army operations in 1997. We have been living in Mannar since then. I have three sisters and three brothers. My father had to chop firewood to eke out a living. My mother went to the Vanni on 16 February to visit one of my sisters who lives there with relatives. As my mother was not at home, my father went out to chop firewood on the evening of 28 February. Eight soldiers came home around 9 p.m. that night. They questioned and chased away a neighbour who had come to listen to the radio news. Then they told my father that they had come to arrest him because they had information that he was involved in smuggling."

She said that a naval rating had woken them up around 3.30 a.m. and told them Uthayakumar would return home in the morning and that they should prepare to welcome him. The rating had given the children a chit in Sinhala which Anusiya said she could not understand as she did not know Sinhala. ●

Commission to Probe Bindunuweva Massacre

March 8 - The Sri Lankan President, Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga, has appointed Justice P. H. K. Kulatilaka, Justice of the Court of Appeal, on 8 March to function as the One-man Commission of Inquiry into the massacre of Tamil detainees at the Bindu-nuwewa Rehabilitation on October 25 last..

The Commission of Inquiry has been given a period of three months to inquire and report on the following matters:

i. The circumstances that led to the incidents that took place at Bindunuweva Rehabilitation Camp on 25/10/2000 in the course of which 27 inmates died and 14 persons were injured.

ii. The administration of the Rehabilitation Camp at Bindunuweva and the

conduct of public officers in so-far-as it is relevant to the said incident.

iii. The person or persons, if any, directly or indirectly responsible, by act or omission for:-

(1) bringing about the said incidents; (2) causing injuries to persons, or the death of the inmates.

iv. Criteria applicable to the admission of persons to rehabilitation centers and the location of such centers.

v. Methods adopted in the rehabilitation of persons admitted to such centers.

vi. The measures necessary to prevent the recurrence of such incidents and the remedial measures if any, to be taken in this regard and to make such recommendation with reference to any of the mat-

ters that have been inquired into under the terms of this Warrant.

As many as 27 inmates were killed and 14 grievously wounded in the attack on the camp by an armed mob. Most of the inmates were suspected LTTE cadres. The camp was located in central Sri Lanka in a pre-dominantly Sinhala village.

The Commission, which has been assigned the task of pinning responsibility for the incident and making recommendations to prevent recurrence of the tragedy, has to report back in three months.

The Government came in for sharp criticism both at home and abroad for the incident, which also sparked ethnic riots in the neighbouring Tamil-dominated districts.

The tragedy is likely to be raised by human rights groups at the annual session of the United Nations Commission for Human Rights in Geneva which began on March 19.

"Lanka Owes Deep Debt of Gratitude to India"

March 2 - Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar said that Sri Lanka owed India a "deep debt of gratitude" for persuading Britain to include the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in its list of banned terrorist organisations. "We owe a deep debt of gratitude to India. Unsolicited by us, Jaswant Singh (External Affairs Minister) made representations to the British government for the banning of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam)," Kadirgamar said, two days after the British government's announcement of its new anti-terrorism laws. Kadirgamar said he had taken up the matter with his Indian counterpart, but Singh had told him that New Delhi had already lobbied London. "That is a particularly friendly gesture by India," he said. terrorist organisations.

The foreign minister said he "saluted" Britain for imposing the ban, but denied state media reports that he was going to London over the weekend to personally convey Sri Lanka's gratitude.

"There is no truth in that. There is no question of one sovereign state thanking another. But I salute the British government for their action despite

the pressures of a democratic society."

He said the British government had not given Sri Lanka a gift or done them a favour, but "all the governments of the world will applaud what Britain has done. They have done the right thing fairly and squarely."

Analysts and media in Colombo claimed the British ban was a major diplomatic victory for the government, which had feverishly lobbied to have the LTTE included in the list of "international terrorist organisations" released by London on February 28.

However, Kadirgamar cautioned both the Sinhalese majority and the

Tamil minority communities against giving in to gloating or despair.

"I say to the Sinhala people of the country, please do not treat it as matter of glory, exultation or triumph. And to the Tamil people, I say, don't treat this as a blow against the Tamil people. The British government is not aiming any blow at any particular group of people," he said.

The government will, however, step up its campaign to have the LTTE banned in other countries, including Norway which is trying to prod the separatists and Colombo to thrash out apolitical settlement to the decades long ethnic conflict.

France, Germany, Canada and Australia were among the countries considering anti-terrorism legislation and Colombo will lobby the governments of these countries to proscribe the Tigers, he said.

Peace Council on LTTE Ban

March 8 - The decision taken by the British Government to list the LTTE for banning under its anti-terrorism legislation ends a period of uncertainty. The growing unwillingness of the international community to tolerate violence by non-state actors aimed at promoting even legitimate political causes is indicated by this British decision, the

National Peace Council said in a statement on 8 March.

The National Peace Council welcomes the statement of the LTTE's international spokesperson Dr Anton Balasingham that the LTTE will continue with the Norwegian-facilitated peace process. We also welcome For-

(continued on next page)

LTTE to Challenge Ban?

The LTTE is planning to contest through legal and political avenues the proscription imposed on it by the British government while continuing to co-operate fully with the on-going peace process facilitated by Norway, according to a news report in the Sunday Leader published from Colombo.

Quoting informed sources in London, the report said that the LTTE is presently consulting leading lawyers in Britain over possible legal action in connection with the recently imposed ban. It has also commenced exploratory discussions with human rights advocacy groups in a bid to associate itself with positive efforts contemplated to challenge the new legislation on terrorism.

LTTE chief negotiator, Anton Balasingham, has also submitted a report on developments after the proscription came into effect, to the Tiger supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran. The LTTE

(Continued from page 7)

Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar's statement that the ban on the LTTE is neither a defeat for the Tamil people nor a cause for gloating by anyone and that the Sri Lankan Government would proceed with the peace process.

As stated by the NPC in a previous statement, the British ban does not affect the fundamental issues of justice and power sharing between the ethnic communities that have been long unresolved in Sri Lanka. It is also necessary to note that despite the British ban on the LTTE, the ground reality in the north-east is that of two undefeated armies and of suffering people who crave a just political solution and an end to the warfare that has blighted their lives for eighteen years. The Sri Lankan parties in conflict need to make use of the situation that has arisen after the ban for the positive purpose of speedily ending the ethnic conflict by means of a just and negotiated political solution. As a civic organisation, the NPC is prepared to join with those who would work for a just and negotiated political solution. ●

chief will thereafter decide upon the politico-legal course to be adopted in response to the ban on his organisation after discussing the issue with his senior military commanders and political leaders in the Northern mainland of the Wanni, the report added.

The report quoting Tamil sources said that the LTTE is expected to close down its already defunct International Secretariat located in Catherines Road and generally adopt a low profile while exploring all legal and political options available to persuade the British government to lift the proscription.

The report detailing the available legal options said that in the first in-

stance, the LTTE could apply to the British Home Secretary to deproscribe it, and if that application is refused an appeal could be lodged to the Proscribed Organizations Appeal Commission. Further legal recourse is available through appeals to courts of appeal.

The report added that apart from legal remedies, Tamils in Britain are also contemplating political options. The coalition known as the Expatriate Tamils British Parliamentary Campaign will continue lobbying British parliamentarians, foreign and home ministry officials on an on-going basis even after the ban comes into force. Although the law is expected to be passed by the lower and upper houses of parliament without much difficulty, the Tamil lobby will persist with its endeavours in the future. ●

Ban on PKK & LTTE Upheld in USA

March 5 - The Supreme Court of the United States on Monday March 5 rejected the appeal to lift the ban on two foreign organizations - Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) - in the two cases of Humanitarian Law Project v. Ashcroft, 00-910, and Ashcroft v. Humanitarian Law Project, 00-1077.

The LTTE and the PKK were designated by the US government as terrorist organisations in October 1997.

In 1996 the US legislature passed the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act on the premise that foreign organizations that engage in terrorist activity would play a negative role among the World Community. The Law delegates power in the hands of the Secretary of State to ban any foreign organizations involved in unlawful activities that could threaten the security of the United States or its Citizens. It is a crime, punishable by up to 10 years in prison, to provide such organizations tangible support such as money, weapons, false identification, training or personnel. There is no ban

on providing medicine or religious materials.

The justices also rejected the government's bid to reinstate two provisions of the law that a lower court barred from being enforced. Thus the Court upheld the decision of the Federal judge in Los Angeles, confirmed by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which confirmed that medicine and religious materials can be sent to the designated organizations; people are free to align themselves with designated organizations through expressions of solidarity and advocacy of their causes, and barred enforcement of the ban on providing personnel or training as those provisions were too vague.

The Court order stated that anyone, who is providing money, weapons or other tangible support including raising funds to encourage terrorism would be a thought of as a criminal offense. The people who are accused of such an offense should bear in mind that they would not be able to get bail.

Two US citizens and six domestic organizations, including the Human-

(continued on next page)

Appeal for Release of Tamil Journalist

8 March - The Paris based international organisation, Reporters Sans Frontiers (Reporters Without Borders), has called for the release of a Tamil journalist detained in Sri Lanka for more than two months. The organisation made the appeal in a letter to the Sri Lankan Justice Minister, Prof G L Peiris. It said the Jaffna-based journalist, Subramaniam Thiruchelvam, the correspondent for the state run Tamil daily Thinakaran in Point Pedro in Jaffna, was arrested on 2 January 2001

in Colombo and detained since for his alleged links with Tamil Tigers.

Robert Ménard, general secretary of RSF, notes in his letter that "this prolonged and excessive detention of a journalist from the Jaffna peninsula is a very worrying warning to all media professionals working there, especially since it has occurred a few months after the still unpunished crime against reporter Mayilvaganam Nimalarajan from Jaffna." Robert Ménard added, "RSF considers that the violence and

degrading treatment to which the journalist was subjected during the first weeks of his detention must be investigated and punished. In fact, such treatment by the security forces is in complete contradiction with the international commitments of Sri Lanka, such as the Convention against Torture."

The RSF letter further states, "According to his family and a human rights activist who visited him, the journalist was beaten with a pipe several times by policemen. He was also handcuffed night and day. Police stated that he confessed his links with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). But his family is adamant that he confessed under duress. Subramaniam Thiruchelvam is accused of collecting money for the LTTE".

Protest Against Christian Conversions

March.6 - Some sections of the Buddhists in Sri Lanka are up in arms over foreign and local Christian evangelical organizations reportedly converting villagers in remote areas using, what the describe as "unethical, coercive and sometimes barbaric methods."

The Centre for Buddhism International (CBI) located in the central province hill town of Kandy, where the Temple of the Buddha's Tooth is the focal point, has accused Christian missionaries of invading rural villages and tea and rubber plantations to proselytize their faith. "Such missionary

activity has upset the quiet and peaceful life of the rural community by the unethical, coercive and sometimes barbaric methods of conversion adopted by these evangelical groups thus creating a conflict situation which often leads to a breach of peace," the organization said in a statement. The statement said the

work of at least 73 foreign and local evangelical groups, with names like Campus Crusade for Christ and Christian Literary Crusade, had been studied by the South Asian think tank, the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies.

Calling on the government to act according to the country's Constitution and protect the Buddhist faith, the CBI charged that other Christian organizations tried to justify the work of the evangelists and deny opposition from Buddhists as "the work of extremists."

Last month, the small town of Hingurakgoda in the north central province was shocked by a Sunday morning attack by club-wielding mobs on a Christian prayer hall as services were being held. At least 38 people were seriously

injured and the hall badly damaged.

Three people were arrested and President Chandrika Kumaratunga had to call for a special inquiry into the incident to forestall any fanning of inter-religious conflict.

Some of those belonging to the mainstream Catholic and Christian churches also seem to be unhappy about the activities of the "crusading evangelists." Their detractors say that the evangelists are from among newly sprung up groups with foreign links who blend religion with relief work, doling out jobs and material aid to converts.

Though the Sinhala-Tamil ethnic conflict in the island has continued for over two decades, there has been little tension among the people on religious lines. With 70 percent of the country's population being Buddhist, the other major religions of Hinduism, Islam, Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism have always steered away from controversy and co-existed peacefully.

(Continued from page 8)

tarian Law Project challenged the law. They said they wanted to provide support for lawful, nonviolent activities by two groups designated as foreign terrorist organizations: the Kurdistan Workers' Party in Turkey and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka.

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● DEFENCE SPENDING HITS \$862 MILLION

March 8- Sri Lanka will spend 75 billion rupees (\$862 million) on defence in 2001, parliament was told, but there was confusion whether that was an increase or decrease as some of the money will cover payments for last year. Deputy Finance Minister G.L. Peiris told parliament in a budget speech some of the money would cover costs from last year when defence spending boomed to an estimated 80 billion rupees as the government fought an increasingly costly ethnic war.

"Defence expenditures, including the deferred payments for last year's procurements, is estimated at 75 billion rupees in 2001," he said. In February, Peiris told parliament that defence spending this year was expected to total 63 billion, about one-sixth of the government's expected overall expenditures. The original forecast for last year was 53 billion, but that rose rapidly after government troops suffered setbacks in fighting Tamil rebels in the northern Jaffna peninsula.

Peiris said economic growth would slip to 4.5 percent this year, from six percent in 2000, on expected falls in agriculture output and slower trade growth.

● US COMMANDO TRAINING

Fifty personnel from an elite commando unit of the United States army arrived in Colombo and were taken to Hotel Lanka Oberoi. They are here to provide military training to the Sri Lankan military. The military trainers will stay couple of days in the island before returning home, according to reliable sources in Colombo.

The arrival of the military trainers was a result of the discussion between the Sri Lankan military chiefs and a US delegation led by Brigadier General B. Donald, stationed in the Pacific region, early this month. The US delegation pledged to provide military training for the Sri Lankan troops.

Both countries' military personnel are concealing the training location. However, the military commanders are lodged in a five star hotel, which is located in the heart of Colombo under heavy security of Sri Lankan authorities.

There is still no public knowledge about the number of Sri Lankan troops,

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which will benefit from this military training. These U.S. Military Commands are in the country for training exercises while the President of Sri Lanka pledged to find a political solution to the ethnic conflict within two months with the support of Norwegian Government and other western States.

The United States of America used to provide military and human rights training to Sri Lankan soldiers who are in active combat with the Tamil Tigers. The US Government never denied the reports of providing military training to strengthen the Sri Lankan armed forces.

● LTTE'S HI-TECH ROCKET LAUNCHERS

March 8 - The LTTE has acquired 'stealth technology' for their speed boats and also the 'rare' but very useful double tube 107 mm Katyusha rocket launcher, probably from North Korea.

Writing in the latest issue of Jane's Intelligence Review, Roger Davies says that a video of the sinking of a Sri Lankan passenger ship at the Trincomalee harbour by a Sea Tiger suicide squad last year, clearly indicates these acquisitions. "This is quite a rare weapon," the author says about the 107 mm double tube rocket launcher.

These weapons are ideal for campaigns of insurgent groups such as the LTTE in Sri Lanka and provide the terrorists with a form of artillery support that can be transported, hidden and easily used. The rockets are fired electrically from a few yard's distance by simply connecting with a battery," Davies says.

● GAMBLING ON CASINOS

March 8 - Sri Lanka moved to legalise gambling and said it was privatising national lotteries and raising taxes across the board to finance the ongoing war. Junior Finance Minister G. L. Peiris said he hoped to bring in legislation to regulate casinos and centres which accept bets on foreign horse and greyhound races in a move which will effectively legalise them. The government may be taking a big gamble by trying to legalise casinos as a similar proposal

in the 1997 budget had to be put on hold after the influential Buddhist clergy opposed the move. "We are facing a financial crisis. We are facing a foreign exchange crisis," said ports minister Ronnie de Mel who had presented 11 budgets under the previous administrations. "We are indeed facing a crisis situation."

● JUDGE SLAMS RANATUNGA

March. 7 - Sri Lanka's cricketing legend Arjuna Ranatunga has been castigated by a judge over allegations he assaulted teenage cricket players, seven of whom ended up in hospital. Magistrate Kusala Weerawardhana said Ranatunga had committed a "very serious act" unbecoming of a celebrity and warned him to be better behaved. Press reports here highlighted the judge's comments made after Ranatunga appeared before him following the cricketer's arrest at a local police station. "As a respected person in the country you should have behaved in a more decent manner. You should not have acted in this fashion," the Colombo magistrate was quoted as saying in the Colombo press. Ranatunga is accused of beating high school children who chased a cricket ball that went into the compound of the Ranatunga family home on 2 March. The Ranatunga home adjoins the Asoka College in Colombo. "Children are children. You were also a child. When dealing with children you should have been more careful as a respected person in the country," Weerawardhana said.

● U.S. TO RECONSIDER LTTE BAN IF...

The US may reconsider a ban on the LTTE if they shed its terror tactics and the use of violence to achieve a political objective, the US ambassador, Ashley Wills, said in speech in Jaffna on 7 March. The US proscribed the LTTE as a "foreign terrorist organisation" in October 1997.

"Can the LTTE be transformed into a democratic, political, non-violent organisation? If it can, those who have seen it at its ugliest and those who are opposed to its tactics, including the United States, will be obligated to reconsider how they regard the LTTE," Mr Wills said.

"If anyone in this audience has contact with the LTTE leadership,

please convey two messages from the US government. "If the LTTE is still fighting for Tamil Eelam, please accept that that goal cannot be achieved., and, if the LTTE really cares about the Tamil people and about assuring their rights, giving up violence and negotiating are the way to go."

● LANKA FIGHTING INDIA'S WAR

February 26 - A former commander of the Sri Lankan Air Force, Air Marshal Oliver Ranasinghe, has said that the war Sri Lanka is fighting now with the Tamil Tigers is not Sri Lanka's but India's.

In an unsolicited four-page submission to the Sri Lankan President, Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga, Ranasinghe says: "At present, we are fighting a war which is not ours but India's. We are fighting it in our country for India." Ranasinghe did not say more on the Indian angle, but his point was that India was cleverly engaging the LTTE outside its shores in order to prevent the militant group from interfering within India itself. "Like the Americans, we should have fought the war in somebody's else's country such as India, UK, Germany or Canada where funds are being generated for the LTTE," he wrote.

About four years ago, Ranasinghe told an inquiry that tender procedures had to be circumvented for the purchase of Israeli Kfir aircraft because other countries were not willing to sell attack aircraft to Sri Lanka saying India would object.

● SLUM CITY - COLOMBO BEATS KOLKATA

March 7 - Sri Lanka's commercial capital of Colombo has emerged on top to share the dubious honour of being the worst slum city in the world with San Salvador, the island's Housing Minister said. With nearly half of Colombo's population living in slums, the city has overtaken Kolkata in India, Housing Minister Mangala Samaraweera said in Colombo. He told reporters that some 420,000 people out of a population of about 850,000 lived in slums of Colombo. "Calcutta (Kolkata) may have more slums, but when you take the numbers per capita, Colombo is worse than Calcutta and at par with San Salvador," Samaraweera said.

● U.N. CONDEMNS STATUE DESTRUCTION

The UN Security Council has added its voice to worldwide condemnation of the decision by the ruling Taleban in Afghanistan to destroy two giant statues of the Buddha as well as other pre-Islamic relics.

In a statement, the council urged the Taleban to stop the "incomprehensible and wanton acts of violence on the cultural heritage of Afghanistan". The treasures being destroyed formed "part of the world's cultural treasure," the UN statement said.

The Taleban had refused to heed calls to stop the destruction, although reports from Afghanistan suggested that work to demolish them was continuing.

Ukrainian ambassador Volodymyr Yel'chenko, who is the acting president of the Security Council, told journalists that the latest information he had was that preparation for the destruction had started - but the actual demolition had not yet taken place. He said the UN was continuing its efforts to prevent it going ahead.

● SPECIAL UNIT ON ILLEGAL DETENTION

A special police unit operating round the clock to investigate public complaints relating to illegal detention and harassments has been established at Rajagiriya. This unit is headed by the Justice Ministry Additional Secretary Nelum Gamage.

This unit will come under the Special Committee of investigations into complaints of illegal detention and harassments functioning under the Ministry of Justice. This committee was established for the expeditious disposal of complaints involving harassments and injustices caused to the members of Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities in the course of duties to maintain law and order in the country.

This committee entertains public complaints in respect of arrests made by the Police and the three Armed Forces. Minister Batty Weerakoon has been appointed as the President of the Committee.

Former Minister Lakshman Jayakody functions as the co-ordinator. The other members are Ministers Prof. G.L. Peiris, S.B. Dissnayake, Lakshman Kadirgamar and Douglass Devananda,

Legal Consultant H.M. Zuhair, TULF Member R. Sampanthan, CWC member R. Yogarajan and PLOTE member D. Siddharthan.

So far 680 public complaints have been received and more than half of that number has been disposed. The committee is empowered to render relief immediately by accelerating the inquiry proceedings and releasing the innocent while prosecuting the suspects and affording facilities for early disposal of justice.

● U.S. GIFTS MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO JAFFNA

March 7 - US Ambassador to Sri Lanka Ashley Wills Tuesday visited the embattled northern town of Jaffna and gifted \$500,000 worth of medical equipment to the region's main hospital. Wills presented the equipment in Jaffna, as part of a humanitarian assistance program that allows the US Department of Defense to help civilian institutions, the US embassy here said in a statement.

The equipment gifted consisted of anesthesia apparatus, portable heart defibrillators, dental equipment and therapeutic ultrasound equipment. "I am pleased to be able to make this donation on behalf of the US government and am confident that it will assist the highly capable staff of the teaching hospital in helping Jaffna residents live better, healthier lives," Wills was quoted as saying.

● LTTE BAN, A BRITISH BETRAYAL

March 4 - TULF MP Joseph Parajasingham commenting on the LTTE proscription in the UK said that it would not affect the peace talks because the LTTE declared and maintained the cease-fire, only because the LTTE wants the Tamils to live peacefully and their suffering to come to an end. When the Irish could have talks even after proscription, the Sri Lankan govt must also reciprocate the cease-fire and come forward for talks. Only then the international community will trust the government. On the other hand, if this opportunity were also missed it would end in disaster. The secretary of ACTC N. Kumaraguruparan said that if the government wants to settle the crisis either by peace talks or militarily, the role of the LTTE is a must adding that

British betrayal is nothing new. Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan was betrayed by the British in 1927 and G.G. Ponnambalam was also betrayed in 1947 and what has happened today is also the same.

● EPDP LEADER ON LTTE BAN

March 5 - EPDP Leader Douglas Devananda commenting on the LTTE ban in Britain said that none will accept the demand for a separate state of Tamil Eelam as a solution and no one is going to accept the position that no solution can be found without the participation of the LTTE. He said that the Tamil speaking people, in their anxiety to achieve equality and freedom, tolerated all types of misdeeds and atrocities by the LTTE in the midst of all other sufferings and losses. They put up with immense hardship and suffering.

They never realized that they were being led along the wrong path. Britain is a country with hallowed democracy traditions. It is in its liberal soil many of world's independent and liberation movements sprouted. It is in that fertile soil progenitors of Sri Lankan Tamil student and freedom movements, such as EROS, GUES, ELF, ELO, were born. The same country has now decided to shut its doors to the LTTE's failure to stick to the basic norms of democracy and its failure to judge correctly the changing global sentiment and environment. Its ingratitude of cutting the Indian hand that fed it and its murder of Rajiv Gandhi who would have become Prime Minister for the second time had taken their toll. The LTTE is not solely to be blamed.

Its supporters, fellow travelers, silent spectators and above all the cheering squad are all joint creators of this situation especially those politicians and JOURNALISTS who found justifications for all its actions and torments. They helped to blind the LTTE to the growing hostility of international opinion against it. It had noticed the dark cloud forming in the horizon, if it had realized the international feeling when Kittu was extradited by Britain a lot of hard-ship and suffering could have been averted, he added.

● REFUSAL OF REQUEST TO MEET UK PM

February 27 - The British High Commissioner in Colombo, Ms. Linda

Dufield, said in a letter to the ten Tamil political parties on 21 February that their request for a meeting with the British Prime Minister Hon. Tony Blair had not been granted. These parties had earlier requested the High Commissioner to make arrangements to see the Prime Minister of Great Britain to urge him not to proscribe the Tamil Tigers as a terrorist organization. In the UK.

According to sources in the Tamil political parties, they wanted the appointment with Prime Minister Blair to also brief him of the tragedy of the endless ethnic crisis.

The High Commissioner stated in her letter to the Tamil political parties that the British Prime Minister's schedule does not permit him to meet the leaders of these parties. She mentioned that Britain had received vast numbers of letters from Tamils around the world and that Britain would take note of all their views in making any decision relating to the LTTE.

Tamil parties had also met the Indian High Commissioner Mr. Gopal Krishna Gandhi earlier in the month and requested to meet the Indian Prime Minister Hon. Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Rhat request also was refused.

● MUSLIM LEADER CONDEMNS TALIBAN

February 28 - A leading Muslim cabinet minister strongly criticized the Taliban regime of Afghanistan for its decision to demolish two unique statues of the Buddha. Leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and the Minister for Trade, Muslim affairs and Shipping Development Rauff Hakeem told BBC's Sandeshaya that the move, which he said was a demonstration of the ignorance of the Taliban about the tolerant teachings of Islam, should be condemned by all Muslims and he would launch an International campaign to stop the demolition of the statues.

● PRESIDENT DONATES EYE

February 28 - Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga, who lost an eye in an assassination bid, has pledged her remaining eye for transplant after her death. Officials said. Kumaratunga would sign papers donating her left eye as part of a campaign to encourage the donation of 100,000 eyes.

● COMPENSATION FOR CAMP KILLINGS

February 28 - The Sri Lankan government has paid compensation to the families of nineteen people killed at a rehabilitation camp for Tamil detainees. President Chandrika Kumaratunga, who handed the money to the families, said she believed that groups such as the Tamil Tigers and hardline Sinhala nationalist parties were behind the incident at the rehabilitation camp at Bindunuweva in Bandarawela in October last year in which twenty-six people died.

● CHEAP WEAPONS

February 24 - The civil war in Sri Lanka has led to a situation where the cost of everything except firearms is skyrocketing, a retired police official in Sri Lanka said in Colombo. Speaking at a seminar on the proliferation of small arms, a retired high level security official, Tassie Seneviratne, said the price of weapons had dropped drastically in Sri Lanka because corrupt police and security forces officers were selling pilfered arms and ammunition.

He said that as a result of nearly two decades of war against the LTTE and earlier JVP uprising, weapons are easily and inexpensively available on the black market. A T56 rifle now costs fifteen thousand rupees while a hand grenade can be bought for a mere five hundred rupees.

Some twenty thousand weapons have been issued to parliamentarians and their bodyguards over the years but only a fifth have ever been returned, Mr. Seneviratne further added.

● AIRFORCE ACQUIRES 50 NEW AIRCRAFT

March 2 - Sri Lanka's air force acquired 50 new aircraft, including combat planes, to bolster its strength. "The Sri Lanka air force can, at last, proudly call itself a full-fledged, combat-ready force," its chief, Air Marshal Jayantha Weerakkody, said in a statement.

The air force received several Israeli-made Kfir and Russian-made MiG-27 jets, Weerakkody said. Other aircraft added to the force include AN-32 and Hercules C-130 transport planes and Bell helicopters.

Weerakkody's statement came as the air force celebrated its 50th anniversary. The government rarely announ-

ces new military acquisitions. The government began buying sophisticated planes and other military hardware after the military suffered its worst defeat since 1983 at the hands of the LTTE in April and May 2000. The new acquisitions turned the tide in the military's favour, with air bombings beating back the guerrillas into the jungle.

● STRIKE BY DOCTORS IN NORTHEAST

March 13 - Doctors in state hospitals in Sri Lanka's embattled northeast went on a token strike 13 March demanding better working conditions after a medical officer died in a Tamil Tiger attack.

The Government Medical Officers Association (GMOA) said its members in the northeastern province struck work to urge the government to provide them with better transport and pay them a risk allowance.

"The government promised us a total of 10 vehicles for five regions, but only one car has been made available for our members' use," a spokesman said.

He said they had demanded better transport after the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas began targeting public transport in the eastern district of Batticaloa in December. In one landmine attack, a doctor was killed and three others were wounded.

The GMOA said the doctors also had 14 other pay and administration related demands and hoped to stage a nation-wide token strike March 20.

● LTTE SAFE HOUSE BUSTED SAY POLICE

March 15 - Police in Colombo claimed that they had made a major breakthrough in their investigations into the attempt to assassinate President Chandrika Kumaratunga in December 1999, when one of those arrested on 11 March in Dehiwela confessed to being a LTTE suicide bomber and 'spilled the beans' revealing details of his involvement in the operation.

The man was among four others, including a woman, arrested from what the police alleged was a LTTE safe house.

The safe house, where all arrested suspects were staying, was located at Waidya Road, Dehiwala where the police claimed they found a quantity

of suicide jackets, explosives, ammunition, detonators and timers used for triggering explosions.

Police claimed that the suspect has revealed that, in targeting President Kumaratunga, the Tigers had deployed the suspect concerned and a female LTTE bomber at the PA's Town Hall election meeting.

When she blew her-self up, nearly claiming the President's life, the man made his getaway, moments before the police cordoned off the area. He had been waiting at a point to blow himself up, in case the woman failed.

One of the five suspects arrested following a raid on the Waidya Road safe house revealed this under police interrogation.

The safe house is also believed to have been the place from where all LTTE suicide jackets (including the ones that caused the deaths of TULF MP Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam in 1999 and Industrial Development Minister C.V. Gooneratne) were assembled. One of the suspects in custody is said to have confessed that Constitutional Affairs Minister Peiris was targeted along with the late C.V. Gooneratne on the day the latter was killed but, Prof. Peiris escaped as he did not join the procession at Ratmalana as planned earlier.

Those arrested included a suspected woman suicide bomber.

The main LTTE suspect was rushed to the Colombo National Hospital, when he attempted to commit suicide by swallowing two cyanide capsules. He is now reported to be out of danger. This man had got himself registered at the Dehiwela Police station by producing forged documents. He had arrived in Colombo on the pretext of seeking employment abroad.

● ONE IN EIGHT MENTALLY ILL

One out of every eight Sri Lankans fall victim to mental illness making Sri Lanka one of the countries with the highest rate of mental patients. According to statistics compiled by Sahanaya, a leading NGO organisation working with the mentally ill, this exceeds the world average of one out of 10.

"One or two Sri Lankans out of every hundred suffer from severe mental sickness, and these numbers indicate the need for more awareness and empathy towards their cause," Sahanaya,

Information Officer, Buddhi Karunaratne said.

Mr. Karunaratne, disclosed these details during the nineteenth anniversary celebration of the Sahanaya Institute held at the Sahanaya, Auditorium on 13 March.

According to Mr. Karunaratne, WHO has declared 2001 as the 'World Mental Health Year'. Sahanaya in keeping with this theme has organised several awareness raising programs to eradicate the inaccurate concepts in the society towards mental illnesses.

The institution has published several hand books as well with a view to focus on different types of mental illnesses to dispel misconceptions about mental illnesses and mental patients, he said.

● NEW PRESIDENTIAL COMPLEX CRITICISED

President Chandrika Kumaratunga has come in for sharp criticism from the opposition over the construction of a multimillion-rupee luxury official residence using public funds.

The main opposition United National Party (UNP) said it was a "sin" that Rs.600 million were being spent on the presidential palace when citizens were asked to tighten their belts.

"Nobody would raise a whimper of protest if the president builds a palace for herself from her personal funds," a UNP statement said. "The crime is the construction of a super luxury presidential palace with such a huge amount of public funds at a time when the country and the people are struggling to survive in a very adverse economic environment created by the government itself," it stated.

The residential complex coming up at Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte, the country's administrative capital where the legislature is located, will have ballrooms, banquet halls, a swimming pool and stables, the UNP charged.

Urban Development Minister Mangala Samarawickreme told reporters previously that the 12,897 square foot house would have five bedrooms, two visiting rooms, one dining room, a library, a kitchen and a pantry with an adjoining office complex.

The UNP pounced on the cost of the construction and worked out the cost at Rs. 46,587 per square foot. "Professionals in the construction indu-

stry say the presidential palace must be the first and only building in the entire world that spends such a huge amount of money for a square foot," said the opposition.

They also alleged that the minister had withheld details of the extent of the entire complex and its cost and challenged him to a live television debate to answer their charges.

Residents in the area around the new residence are reportedly up in arms at the prospect of inconvenience that the increased security, including closed roads and military checkpoints, that Kumaratunga's decision to change her house will bring in its wake.

● LTTE FUNDRAISING TARGETED IN SINGAPORE

March 14 - Singapore has broken up a fundraising network for Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels and banned two members from the city state while placing the leader of the ring under tight curbs, a Reuters report said.

The Home Affairs Ministry said 13 people, including five permanent residents, were found to be involved in activities supporting the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) after a swoop by the Internal Security Department late last year.

"The clandestine network was involved in covert fundraising and procurement activities in support of the LTTE," the ministry wrote in response to questions from Reuters. "The action taken was not in response to any request or in coordination with any foreign government." The ministry gave no details of the amount raised or the nature of the procurement.

The ring's leader, a professional who obtained Singaporean citizenship, was put under a two-year restriction order in February that requires him to stop all LTTE activities and seek official permission to travel abroad, move house or change jobs.

"Administrative action has been taken under the Immigration Act to ban two of them, who were more seriously involved, from Singapore," the Home Affairs Ministry said. "The others in the network were warned." The LTTE is technically not allowed to exist as a group in Singapore because it is not officially registered. The city state expelled 10 Sri Lankans for similar activities in 1985.

● RAGGING LEADS TO SUICIDE

March 15 - A fresher at the Swiss Technical College in Inmaduwa, Dambulla who was hospitalised due to severe ragging, committed suicide by hanging, on his return home on 13 March.

Investigations revealed that the student identified as Sameera Chaturanga Dabare (19) residing at Kawatagama Matale had been the victim of brutal ragging on admission to the technical college. His vital organs had sustained injuries as a result of the ragging.

Police investigations have revealed that the student had suffered injuries due to methyl-calycite, a chemical being applied on his sexual organs. He had also suffered further forms of ragging which had disturbed him emotionally and prompted him to commit suicide.

Following the ragging incident, he had been admitted to the Denzil Kobbekaduwa base hospital, in Dambulla, where he had been hospitalised for three days. He had committed suicide on his return home from the hospital.

His grieving father, P.P.H. Dabare said that although Sameera refused to go back to college after the ragging incident, he advised him to do so because of its relevance to his future.

● LANKA OFFERS TO PURCHASE AFGHAN HISTORIC ARTIFACTS

March 14 - Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickrematunge offered to purchase whatever historic artefacts are left in Afghanistan. Wickrematunge conveyed the proposal during a 40-minute meeting with Taliban envoy Abdul Salam Zaeef in Islamabad.

Sri Lankan High Commissioner General C.S. Weerasooriya said that Sri Lanka was concerned about the preservation of the world's cultural heritage and the offer related to not only Buddhist relics. Zaeef promised to communicate immediately the Sri Lankan offer to the Taliban leadership in the Islamic militia's southern bastion of Kandahar, he said.

Sri Lanka, a seat of Theravada Buddhism, joined the chorus of international protest after the Islamic militia started destroying statues throughout Afghanistan to stop idolatry.

Afghanistan was center of Buddhism as late as the ninth century and its

most famous monuments, two colossal Buddha figures dating back more than 1,500 years, were the main targets of the Taliban's iconoclasm.

Wickrematunge, who arrived on a five-day visit, also met Pakistani military ruler General Pervez Musharraf and President Mohammad Rafiq Tarar.

● MILITARY PURCHASE SCAM

March 10 - An Army Colonel and four soldiers have been arrested by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), in connection with their investigation into a multi-million rupee military hardware procurement fraud.

CID sources said that investigations had allegedly revealed that Rs 9 million had been paid by the Army to a bogus business establishment using five forged vouchers submitted in November 2000. The CID had been called in to investigate the weapons scam by the Sri Lanka Army.

The five vouchers had been submitted with supporting receipts for the supply of weapons to the Army by a bogus business establishment called "Mahajana Establishment" in Mount Lavinia.

CID Investigations conducted so far into this alleged racket had revealed there had not been any Mahajana Establishment at the said address but a restaurant. On a search made at the restaurant by the CID they were able to recover certain documents pertaining to the issue of these forged receipts.

And Bank statements under the name 'Mahajana Hardware' to which account this money was in form of cheques issued by the Army. The owner of the restaurant and the manager who operated the account were taken into custody by the CID.

A CID source revealed that arrests of few more army personnel are imminent in relation to this inquiry. Also it is understood that some of the civilian suspects who are involved in this alleged fraud have distributed money to certain Army personnel out of the defrauded money.

● INDIAN HC VISITS JAFFNA

March 3 - The High Commissioner for India, Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi, made a two day visit to the Jaffna peninsula, from March 3 and 4. Arriving

(continued on next page)

● PEACE PROCESS

Peace hopes glistered on March 4 when Norwegian facilitator Erik Solheim left Colombo for a meeting with LTTE negotiator Anton Balasingham with new thoughts about resolving the sensitive question of easing Government's economic embargo, a measure which the LTTE sees necessary to create a conducive climate for peace talks.

"The way things are moving I feel that the gap is indeed narrowing," a beaming Solheim told newsmen on his way to the airport.

A Norwegian official based in Colombo, Thomas Strangeland, described the March 3 meeting with President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga constructive. He said: "The meeting is constructive and we hope to bring the two parties together."

Solheim is expected back in Colombo with Balasingham's response to President Kumaratunga's suggestions in a few days before the President leaves on a 3-week European tour which include Germany, Belgium and Netherlands.

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar told an Indian business magazine, Business Online, on March 7 that the progress in the on-going Norwegian effort to commence talks is painstakingly slow as many obstacles and hurdles had to be cleared.

(Continued from page 14)

on the morning of March 3 by air, he went by road to Point Pedro to visit the Sri Ramakrishna Seva Ashrama in the context of the on-going birth anniversary celebrations of the great sage Sri Ramakrishna. He was received at the Ashrama by Swami Chidrupananda. Special prayers and chants were offered at the shrines of Sri Ramakrishna and Ma Saradadevi.

Swami Chidrupananda explained the salient features of the educational and medical work done by the Ashrama for the people of Point Pedro and its surrounding areas.

The High Commissioner thereafter proceeded to Jaffna where he paid a courtesy call on the senior citizen of Indian origin and retired medical practitioner Dr. Rangamma. Later Shri Gandhi joined devotees in the evening puja at the historic temple of Lord Muruga at Nallur. He also visited the Roman Catholic Cathedral in the town and paid a call on Rev. Dr. S. Jebane-

NEWS REVIEW

"It is a very complex problem," Kadirgamar said. Each step has to be taken very carefully.

A week earlier he was more positive. He told the media and foreign diplomats in Colombo at two separate meetings that the peace process was "moving forward" and he viewed 2001 as the Year of Agreement. By this he reaffirmed the information President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga provided to Chennai fortnightly Frontline.

She told the interviewer N. Ram who asked whether talks about talks had commenced: That has already begun; we have made our position clear; we have told them that from Day One of the talks there has to be agenda. Eelam is out of the question; we are willing to discuss anything else; in short from Day One we start on substantive issues.

She revealed in another interview in New Delhi on February 24 that she had told Solheim to fix a date within two months to commence negotiations. Kadirgamar told Business Online that keeping deadlines would be difficult as problems crop up along the way. But he told foreign diplomats that the date and venue of the talks were under con-

sideration. He declined to tell where and when the talks would begin.

The President said that she was prepared to commence talks "even today" and the two month delay was due to the LTTE demand for conducive measures before the beginning of talks. Kadirgamar revealed that talks about some of those matters were still on. LTTE wants substantial lifting of the economic embargo which prevents the transport of a variety of goods to areas under its control in Vanni and the east. Informed sources said the Government which at one time denied the existence of an economic embargo had relented and had agreed to supply some of the essential commodities including kerosene, petrol and diesel. But it wants the right to restrict the quantity. It is under immense military pressure to do so.

President Kumaratunga and Kadirgamar reiterated the government position that peace talks on the political basis of the solution should begin while the war is on. "There will be no ceasefire," Kadirgamar said emphatically and added, "Let's go for peace."

● BRITISH BAN ON TIGERS

The British decision to include the LTTE in the list 21 terrorist organizations had not hindered the peace process as was earlier feared. Balasingham had announced LTTE's determination to continue the unilateral ceasefire it declared on December 24 and had extended twice despite the Government's refusal to respond. President Kumaratunga and Kadirgamar had repeatedly called it a fake but the Government was forced by the international community to desist from launching massive military operations. It seems to be content with sporadic air and artillery attacks just enough to keep its Sinhala hardliners happy.

Analysts here and abroad argue that the international community that shackled the LTTE with terrorism label had come hard on the Government to prevent it from using the clout to score military victories. Commentator Victor Ivan says the international community which had taken away armed struggle, the easiest weapon in the hands of the oppressed, had also blunted the capacity of the Governments to suppress the just rights of minorities and other groups.

US ambassador Ashley Wills hinted at that approach when he told the

Jaffna audience that his Government would review the ban on the LTTE if it behaves as it had done the past three months. LTTE had refrained from attacks on civilians or civilian targets since the November 1 Pirabakaran-Solheim meeting in Vanni.

British Home Secretary Jack Straw who presented the draft law, Terrorism Act 2000, in the House of Commons on February 28 said the recommended ban would have no bearing in the peace process in Sri Lanka if the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE were genuinely committed to the search for a negotiated settlement and elaborated the appeal procedures available to the listed organizations to contest the ban. Proscribed organization can appeal against the ban to the Home Minister. If he rejects the appeal the concerned organization can appeal to a new tribunal to be set up soon.

Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh, Kadirgamar revealed, had had played a subtle role in getting the LTTE banned. Singh had made representations to Britain against the LTTE. Kadirgamar is now planning to ask Norway, Canada, France, Germany and Austr-

alia which are considering enacting anti-terrorism laws to ban the LTTE. He said the Government would approach South Africa too in that matter.

Britain, despite listing LTTE for ban, had reiterated its firm commitment of support to a negotiated settlement which addresses the aspirations of all communities with a united Sri Lanka and to continued Norwegian facilitation.

The British ban had evoked diverse reactions among different sections of the Sri Lankan society. The Government owned Daily News presented the ban as a diplomatic triumph for Sri Lanka. Sinhala hardliners headed by the Mahanayakes of the Malwatte and Asgiriya Chapters welcomed the ban and read it as strengthening their position that LTTE should be militarily crushed and efforts at a political settlement shelved. Sinhala Urumaya leader Tilak Karunaratne called upon the Government to seize this opportunity to call off peace talks with the LTTE. He reiterated his party's opposition to Norway's facilitation and threatened to launch an international campaign to force European nations including Norway to ban the

LTTE. Sinhala opinion generally was upbeat.

Tamils, generally, were downhearted. They had, in a rare show of unity, had called upon Britain not to ban the LTTE as they feared that Sinhala hardliners would prevent any effort at a peaceful settlement. Their unity was the outcome of the Tamil community's historical experience. All previous efforts of moderate Sinhala leadership to settle the Tamil problem had been derailed by Sinhala extremism. It happened in 1957, 1965, 1981, 1987 and last August when President Kumaratunga abandoned her attempt to enact the new constitution.

Disappointment among the Tamil parties and groups was widespread. Mavai Senathiraja of the Tamil United Liberation Front, Suresh Premachandran of the EPRLF and Sri Kantha of the TELO said Britain had let down the Tamils and weakened their negotiating position. Jaffna and Batticaloa. LTTE too was disappointed. Balasingham made it clear that the bargaining position of the Tamil people would be weakened, eroded.

University students in the north and

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east who were spearheading the Tamil demand for the return of peace for the Tamil areas were equally disappointed. "Britain had helped the Sinhalese to deny their aspiration," a Batticaloa University spokesman said.

Tamil aspiration had been identified in the resolutions the two university communities passed in the last two months as recognition of the separate identity of the Tamil community, their historical areas of habitation comprising the northern and eastern provinces, autonomous administration and the right of self determination.

Kadirgamar tried to allay the Tamil fear. He told the Sinhala people not to treat the British ban on the LTTE as a "matter of gloating or triumph" and told the Tamils not to consider it as a blow against them. "We ought to look at it rather as the end of a violent chapter and the opening of another of peace and prosperity," Kadirgamar said.

Doubts still linger in the minds of the Tamil people. Will President Kumaratunga and her Government be able to withstand the onslaught of Sinhala extremists? Will she be able to marginalize the Sinhala hardliners within her Government? Will she be able to get Parliament and the people to accept any settlement worked out with the LTTE? And, this is the most important of all: Can President Kumaratunga deliver a solution that would satisfy the aspirations of the Tamil people?

The President seems to be unsure herself. She told Ram that restarting the constitutional process would involve getting the entire people to talk about the constitutional basis of the settlement. This would have to be done while negotiating with the LTTE. She had spoken to the Indian leaders about the possibility of setting up Constitutional Council. Will she be able to do it?

● UNREST IN TEA ESTATES

The country's robust and vital tea industry is simmering. The protest started as a prayer campaign at a junction in Hatton on February 19. Ceylon Workers Congress president Arumugan Thondaman and a few others sat on a temporary stage while tea plucker girls sang religious hymns for two hours. They demanded that the monthly allowance of Rs. 400 awarded by the Government to state and private sector workers as compensate for the cost of

living rise should be given to the plantation workers too.

Neither the plantation companies nor the Government took the prayer campaign seriously but within a week the entire estate sector was taken by storm. The pent-up grievances of the plantation workers surged and they backed the protest in unison. The workers shed their trade union differences and gathered in thousands and joined the prayer campaign compelling their leadership to follow them to the prayer site. This resulted in a rare sense of unity among plantation trade unions, leader holding hands and pledging to make the unity to endure.

On March 10 this unity took another dimension with the leaders of Tamil and Muslim political parties pledging their support. Arumugan Thondaman who holds the cabinet portfolio of Estate Infrastructure in President Kumaratunga Government told media on March 11: The prayer campaign first united the plantation workers. Then it united all sections of the Indian Tamil community. Now it has united the minority community.

This unity had compelled the plantation companies and the Government to take notice of the prayer campaign. The plantation companies which said that the requested pay rise would entail an additional annual expenditure of Rs. 140 million was told that they had made a profit of Rs.2000 million last year.

Then they climbed down and conducted two rounds of negotiations with the trade unions which had failed to yield results. But the companies cannot ignore the protest any more. The protest had spread to the estate level and production had begun to fall. A few incidents of violence had also occurred. The Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of a tea estate in Madulsima were kept captive by the workers for a day and were released after much effort. Some of the estate company executives had gone hiding fearing similar fate for them. In some estates the quantity of the leaves plucked had dwindled. In one estate workers forcibly prevented the transport of tea chests to the Colombo auctions. Trade Unions expect a settlement on March 13. Failure would lead to death fast and other consequences.

In another development 35 United National Party Members of Parliament handed to the Ceylon Electricity Board

asking it not to implement its 25 percent surcharge on electricity rates. They alleged that the state board is seething with inefficiency, financial mismanagement and corruption. Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and UNP are organizing strikes to demand salary increases to the workers. Massive labour unrest is on the cards. Next few weeks are going to heap troubles on the Government.

● THE BUDGET

Meanwhile the confederation of state sector trade unions are meeting on March 14 to decide on a strike demanding a wage hike. Its organizer Patrick Perera said that private sector trade unions too had pledged their support to their strike move.

Perera said workers are finding it difficult to make ends meet. Cost of living has become unbearable "We asked for a monthly pay rise of Rs. 3000. The Government appointed a committee to look into the matter but is asking the workers to bear the difficulties for the next six months.

Inflation rose in February to the four-year high of 8.7%. It will soar further. Trade unions and the public expected relief in the budget. They received only a pledge that the wage would be increased before the end of the year. That pledge given by the Deputy Finance Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris when he presented the budget on March 8 was based on the expectation that the war would cease in the next six months.

People are not happy with the budget. Reflecting this displeasure UNP and the JVP have announced their opposition to the budget and the UNP boycotted the traditional Finance Minister's Tea Party. "We don't want your tea when you have made it difficult for the people to drink a decent cup of tea," a UNP MP told his colleagues in the Government bench.

The business community too is not happy. "More taxes, more borrowings and increased spending," was the pithy comment by an economist. There were only two taxes- one-percentage point rise in the defence levy which went up to 7.5% and 20% surcharge on corporate tax which raised the tax on listed companies from 30% to 36% and on non-listed companies from 35% to 42%. Both taxes would hurt the consumers and businesses.

The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, Sri Lanka's premier trade chamber, in a caustic comment said the budget is not tuned to realize neither the vision of the private sector nor the Government's Vision 2010. It said the budget was not properly targeted for development.

The Chamber doubted whether the Government could achieve the targeted revenue or the targeted curtailment of expenditure. It also doubted the capacity of the Government to raise the Rs. 106 billion allocated for capital expenditure. Budget deficit would not be contained to 8.5% of the GDP and interest rates reduced to the projected 16%, the chamber said.

That there are a few positive traits in the budget cannot be denied: accent to the modernization of agriculture, encouragement for small and medium industries and the incentives provided for the development of the information technology are examples.

Prof. Peiris's enumeration on the cost of war was a gem. He said: It is foolish to deny or ignore the cost of war. The increase in defence expenditure from around 1.5% in early 1980s to 6% of GDP in 2000 has a huge cost on our economy. According to Central Bank estimates, economy could have achieved over 8% growth and reached a per capita income of US\$2500 by now instead of 5% growth with US\$ 900 per capita income, a loss of income of US\$ 1600 per person."

"The budget gives us a bundle of lies," said UNP spokesman Dr. Karunasena Kodituvakku. UNP is targeting its attack on two issues: construction of the Presidential complex and the elephantine cabinet. The Presidential Complex will cost Rs. 1.7 billion and the 44-member cabinet is costing the country dearly.

The latest joke in the grapevine is this: President Kumaratunga telephoned Minister Mangala Samaraweera around 1 am and asked him why the telecast of the music program to help the soldiers was stopped at midnight. "Your Excellency! I am no more the Minister in charge of the media. You must ask my successor!" Mangala replied.

The cabinet is so large that the President herself does not know her ministers!

Tamils Seek Restoration of their Rights

- Justice C. V. Wigneswaran

"My stint as a judicial officer in the Northern and Eastern Provinces enlightened me as to the feelings and aspirations of the vast majority of the citizens of those two provinces. It is not devolution nor sharing of powers they seek. They seek the restoration of their rights. Rights which were snatched from them by virtue of mathematical innovation where the majority in two provinces were added to the majority of seven provinces and thus made into the minority in nine provinces. This was sought to be corrected when laws pertaining to the Reasonable use of Tamil were formulated in 1958 and 1966. But even these were given up without understanding the implications involved," the newly elevated Supreme Court Judge, C. V. Wigneswaran, said in his ceremonial address on Wednesday, 7 March

The Bench and the Bar paid tribute to the two New Supreme Court Judges, Justice Hector S. Yapa and Justice C. V. Wigneswaran at the ceremonial sitting held at the Superior Court Complex to welcome them.

Associated on the Bench with the Chief Justice, Sarath N. Silva on the occasion were Justices, Dr. A. R. B. Amerasinghe, S. W. B. Wadugodapitiya PC, Priyantha Perera, Dr. Shirani A. Bandaranayake, D. P. S. Gunasekera, Ameer Ismail, P. Edussuriya, H. S. Yapa and C. V. Wigneswaran. President of Court of Appeal Justice Asoka de Silva and other Judges of the Court of Appeal, High Court Judges, Judges of the Colombo District Court, Colombo Chief Magistrate and Additional Magistrates were accommodated on the dais.

Justice Wigneswaran speaking in all three languages said: "I thank you for your kind sentiments. This is indeed a rare occasion in the life of an Original Court Judge. More so when one realises that having started as a Combined Court District Judge cum Magistrate after 15 years of practice, as one of the youngest in the hierarchy at the point

of entry into the Original Judiciary, despite many a young officer being appointed above him, not due to any intrinsic capability absent in himself, but due to the discretion of the Executive of whatever hue in power who preferred kindred spirits in the Higher Judiciary, that it was yet possible to enter the portals of this hallowed institution even at this comparatively late age. I am aware that age, judicial experience, eldership coupled with erudition together are no more relevant in appointments.

Loving kindness cannot be a mere concept. It has to be a living reality. Often today we miss the wood for the trees when we wax eloquently about the Teachings of the Great Masters in mesmerising language forgetting the spirit of their Teachings and failing to imbibe them in our lives. Otherwise how do we account for the echoing of war drums of hatred from the portals of Love and Religion?

I have a purpose in speaking to you in my mother tongue which I am delighted to note is the tongue of you Mr. Attorney.

As a Tamil speaking denizen if I do not use my mother tongue, I would soon be forced to converse in my brother's tongue only. Some may ask why not! But it should not be so if I feel pressured to do so. It should not be so if by design I am compelled to do so. It should not be so if by arbitrariness I am forced to do so. Let us not forget that each of us is Sovereign in this country.

Singapore and Ceylon in the old days had the same problem. One country decided to give equal recognition to all four languages right from the beginning and that country flowers and flourishes. The other forced one language in preference to the others on all and that country is in precarious political turmoil. While such turmoil goes around

in this country, Globalisation goes on and Mother Earth is becoming a smaller place to live on, with technological advances ensuring instant correspondence, intermingling of races and indorsing of international tongues for easy communication.

Mr. Attorney and Mr. Gunaratne, I must confess that I have had a background and conditioning which makes me truly Sri Lankan. My parents hailed from the Northern and Eastern Provinces. I was born here in Hulfsdorp in the Western Province. My early education before joining Royal Primary School was in the North Western and North Central Provinces. My father had worked as an officer of the Government inter alia in the Central Province and Southern Province where I had occasion to mingle with the people of those areas. I have worked as a Judicial Officer in the Uva Province and I count the friendship of many from the Sabaragamuwa Province. I feel every inch a native of this country. I have always felt proud in foreign forums to be recognised as a person hailing from this blessed Isle. All three languages spoken by the denizens of this country have nourished me. I have been nurtured not only in one but in all four major religions of this country having started comparative study of religions from an early age. I am one of the few still living among those who organised from the then Congress of Religions in 1965 or thereabouts the visit of the then Mahanayake Thera of the Malwatte Chapter to Jaffna.

It was a relative of my mother, Sir Ponnampalam Ramanathan, who risked his life to travel to England to place the case of the Sinhala Buddhists before the Queen in the early part of the last century. Thanks to the education I had at my Alma Mater, I have never felt second to any human being in this country despite the disabilities decreed on my community, though I have respected and do respect most humbly the intrinsic humanity and the unique individuality of every human being. I do respect their talents and capabilities sometimes different from mine. I respect the divinity in every one of them. Loving kindness cannot be a mere concept. It has to be a living reality. Often today we miss the wood for the trees when we wax eloquently about the Teachings of the Great Masters in mesmerising language forgetting the spirit of their Teachings and failing to imbibe them in our lives. Oth-

erwise how do we account for the echoing of war drums of hatred from the portals of Love and Religion?

My stint as a Judicial Officer in the Northern and Eastern Provinces during the turbulent period from 1979 to 1986 enlightened me as to the feelings and aspirations of the vast majority of the denizens of those two Provinces. It is not devolution nor sharing of powers they seek. They seek the Restoration of their Rights. Rights which were snatched from them by virtue of a mathematical innovation where the majority in two provinces were added to the majority in seven provinces and thus made into the minority in nine provinces. This was sought to be corrected when laws pertaining to the Reasonable Use of Tamil were formulated in 1958 and 1966. But even these were given up without understanding the implications involved.

I have always referred to an incident that used to happen when we were marble playing youngsters in school. Some of our seniors who were not Prefects would pounce upon us suddenly and illegally confiscate all our marbles in order that they would themselves play with them. When we protested they would keep 90% of the marbles and offer us 10% and thereafter progressively increase it to about 20% forgetting that all the marbles were ours and the seniors had no right to confiscate in the first instance. The majority of those in the Northern and Eastern Provinces were always Tamil speaking until Independence and their Language, Religions, Culture and Customs - mainly Islamic, Christian and Hindu, and ways of life within the special topographical and climatic environment should have been allowed to blossom and flourish without interference after Independence. So too the special culture and way of life that had grown up in certain areas of the Central Province. These were not done and we face the consequences today.

Even though you Mr. Attorney and I are today in our respective honoured positions we cannot forget that two sparrows would not make a summer. In fact there were many more sparrows in high positions due to their intrinsic worth in almost every field during the middle of the last century. But we are today progressively depleting in numbers in this part of the Island and like the Burghers we too would soon be hardly heard of in Judicial, Legal or Governmental Service or even the Private Sector. It is

a sad reflection of our times that after me there had not been a single Tamil speaking President of the Law Students Union after 1962 at the Sri Lanka Law College.

It is because I love this country and all its people including those who hate me for what I am, that I take this opportunity to say - not for my sake, not for the sake of the Tamil people but for the sake of cordial relationship among all communities in this Island of ours, for good governance and a progressive future, that unless we recognise that the Tamil Language and its culture are to the Tamils what the Sinhala Language and culture are to the Sinhalese and therefore make Tamil the dominant language of the Northern and Eastern Provinces requiring the study of it compulsory for all in those two Provinces just as Sinhalese is recognised as the dominant language of the other seven provinces, with English as the link language between equals.

The wrong done by the enthroning of one Language in 1956 could never be erased; the havoc created by the deletion of Article 29(2) of the 1947 Constitution and the doctrine of ultra vires from subsequent Constitutions could never be put right; the feelings of the Tamils wounded inter alia by the 1958, 1977 and 1983 riots cannot ever be assuaged. Whether the Tamil Language is spoken and preserved in other countries is irrelevant. The Sri Lankan Tamils need to develop their language and culture peculiar to themselves in their mother country. The sterile and impotent cosmetic provisions now appearing in our Constitution has little meaning to the Tamil speaking people of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. They need to govern themselves in their own Language with the little interference from outside.

An Original Court Judge cannot under the present system of nomination aspire to the Higher Judiciary, ever hope to occupy the highest office in the Judiciary except due to the condescending discretion of the Executive. Therefore I must feel that the acme of my career has arrived today, that I cannot aspire for anything more but only fade away with time into oblivion.

I nevertheless thank both of you for making this a memorable event for me. I thank all my well-wishers who found time to be present here today. May all beings be happy! May Divinity descend upon their Hearts!"



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US Policy on Sri Lanka Spelt Out

Observations on Sri Lanka's Conflict

By Mr E. Ashley Wills,
United States Ambassador to Sri Lanka

"Our approach to Sri Lanka proceeds from the following official US opinions: this war must end, the sooner the better; we reject the idea that there is a military solution to this conflict and favour a negotiated outcome (all that is needed is the political will to negotiate; we are also convinced that in these negotiations neither side need be the loser, both can win); the opportunity cost of the war in economic terms, and the human cost in deaths, injuries, displaced persons and dysfunctional families, are staggering and no longer tolerable; that is why we, India, the EU, Japan and many other nations support the noble effort of the Norwegians to facilitate direct talks between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE; we reject the idea of an independent Tamil state carved out of Sri Lankan territory; we regard the LTTE as a terrorist organization and do not believe it is the sole representative of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka; we also are for Tamil rights; the Tamil people must be treated equally, respectfully and with dignity within a democratic Sri Lankan state whose exact political form should be determined by the people of this country; we do not believe Sri Lanka, or any part of it, is the special preserve of any one ethnic group; indeed, we regard Sri Lanka as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-cultural state; and although we are convinced that the solution to this conflict can and must be negotiated by Sri Lankans; we stand ready to assist in ways the principal parties find appropriate," United States Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Mr E. Ashley Wills, said in a speech 'Observations on Sri Lanka's Conflict' on 7 March at the Jaffna Public Library during his recent visit to Jaffna in the north of the island.

The following is the full text of the US

Ambassador's speech:

"We live in a dangerous world in which there is a profusion of different systems and a diffusion of power. It is a world of conflicts among nations and within nations; a world where values collide; and a world in which the United States and a few other nations possess frightening destructive power, yet often find it impossible to order events. Corporations and NGO's vie with sovereign governments for influence as never before. In this globalizing world, we are all subject to radical shifts in technology and communication, to bewildering movements of refugees, currencies and markets. We are also subject to fervent nationalisms, ethnic supremacists and old-fashioned haters; any nation or group can now make its anger known, if not at conference tables, then by means of assassination, bombing or hostage-taking. And it is a world so dizzying that far too many seek the comforting symmetry of neat slogans and one-dimensional ideologies, fitting facts to theory as in the story of the Procrustean bed.

"In such a world, American ideals and interests are plainly at risk. And yet one encounters a desire by some Americans to turn away from complex problems and retire to the fastnesses of our coasts, to a fortress America. They have begun to look warily at the morning newspaper headlines, almost as if they were expecting a sudden blow. They sense a terrible looming just over the horizon of the news; they are pleading for surcease and disengagement. And yet where is it safe to hide? Odysseus could return from his wanderings to Ithaca, but the modern world does not permit such refuge. Americans, like all other peoples, yes, including the people of Jaffna, are hostage to the interconnectedness of things.

The United States and South Asia are closely connected, despite the geographic distance that separates us. Family ties are strong; almost two million Americans are of South Asian descent. Trade between us is growing; we are already South Asia's, and Sri Lanka's, biggest export market. And ideas link us, including the idea of human rights.

This latter idea arises often when US policy-makers regard South Asia. This region has several flourishing democracies and yet these democracies are being tested and torn by conflict, in particular ethnic conflict. The United States - a nation committed to equality, the rule of law and human rights - wants to be helpful in resolving these conflicts. But we must be careful about how we do so. We know the limits of our power and wisdom. We do not believe that the planet comprises the United States and countries aspiring to be the United States. In devising policy toward this region of ancient cultures, we know that a rounded historical perspective and due regard for South Asian attitudes are needed.

And so is humility! As an American diplomat who has lived five years in India and about six months here in Sri Lanka, I appreciate the need for humility in approaching South Asia. Sometimes, frankly, it seems to me that this region produces more history than it can consume. So complex are the various religious, ethnic and political relationships in South Asia that I often think one needs a degree in higher math to make sense of it all!

Forgive me for whining for a moment. One of the afflictions of being a superpower is that in most cases the actual leverage the United States can bring to bear is perpetually overestimated. Nowhere is this truer than in Sri Lanka. Many of the letters I have received from concerned Americans regarding Sri Lanka are permeated with the notion that, if only we wanted to, we could right all the wrongs in Sri Lanka, a country half a world away from us. Some write to me in tones that suggest I am the Governor of the 51st state. Their underlying assumption seems to be that American power must match the level of their personal con-

cern. The problem, of course, is that it doesn't and never will. The only puzzling aspect of this is that this kind of thinking prevails among those who are often the first to bemoan American interventionism elsewhere.

Another aspect of these letters is their frequent use of simple syllogisms. One kind of letter argues thusly: the US has declared war against terrorism worldwide; Sri Lanka is being attacked by terrorists, the LTTE; therefore the United States should declare war against the LTTE. Another kind takes this tack: the United States opposes discrimination; Tamils are discriminated against in Sri Lanka; therefore the United States should support the creation of Tamil Eelam.

If arguments acquired cogency from vehemence, then these cases would be made. But the cases are not compelling because the logic breaks down even if the emotion is understandable. Of course we acknowledge that terrorism is an ugly feature of Sri Lankan life, and of course we are aware of the deprivations visited on Sri Lanka's people, notably the people of Jaffna, and the northeast, by this conflict. To be fair, I must also point out that this ugly war has affected tens of thousands of Sinhala families too. The point is we do not see solutions in simplifications of Sri Lanka's complexity.

Another kind of letter I have received asks the provocative question: what right does the United States have to preach when, within its own borders, ethnic tensions abound. Isn't this hypocrisy?

It is a fair question and one worthy of elaboration. Hypocrisy has long been a preoccupation of puritannical America, as novels from *The Scarlet Letter* to *Catcher in the Rye* make clear. Does the United States, facing unresolved racial tensions of its own, lack the moral standing to address ethnic conflicts around the world?

Although this is a tempting argument, it is flawed. In most areas of moral endeavour, the United States doesn't usually demand perfection as a precondition for doing good. American history is full of public figures and plain

citizens whose personal weaknesses did not prevent them from contributing to our nation's progress. Americans, and I think most reasonable people around the world, recognize that although physicians may be careless of their own health, or builders may themselves live in poorly maintained homes, or preachers may occasionally indulge in a fit of temper, these people can still help others. To demand perfection is to hold the charitable impulse hostage to personal traits. Nations, like people, can confront others - even when their own houses are not fully in order.

The United States has many blemishes. But the trend lines are still positive. The United States is a melting pot where cultures mingle. It is a country where most people are literate and potable water flows from nearly every tap. And it is still a country - to cite the saddest test - that Cubans, Haitians and refugees of every sort are literally dying to enter.

What is our moral obligation? To preserve America and extend its example - in particular its example of tolerance, equality and individual freedom - as far as possible. Can we do so without tending our own ethnic garden? No. If America loses its melting-pot mentality, it loses one of its core strengths. But can it do so without helping resolve global conflicts? No again. Cemeteries at home and abroad are filled with Americans who died fighting against militarism, imperialism, totalitarian ideologies of the left and right, and ethnic cleansing. If the United States loses its willingness to engage internationally, its generous impulse, it loses its soul. Balance, that great principle of moral reasoning, is what it's all about.

What does our moral reasoning tell us about Sri Lanka, and how does this translate into policy? Our approach to Sri Lanka proceeds from the following official US opinions: ● this war must end, the sooner the better; ● we reject the idea that there is a military solution to this conflict and favour a negotiated outcome (all that is needed is the political will to negotiate; ● we are also convinced that in these negotiations neither side need be the loser, both can win); ● the opportunity cost of the war

in economic terms, and the human cost in deaths, injuries, displaced persons and dysfunctional families, are staggering and no longer tolerable; ● that is why we, India, the EU, Japan and many other nations support the noble effort of the Norwegians to facilitate direct talks between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE; ● we reject the idea of an independent Tamil state carved out of Sri Lankan territory; ● we regard the LTTE as a terrorist organization and do not believe it is the sole representative of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka; ● we also are for Tamil rights; the Tamil people must be treated equally, respectfully and with dignity within a democratic Sri Lankan state whose exact political form should be determined by the people of this country; ● we do not believe Sri Lanka, or any part of it, is the special preserve of any one ethnic group; indeed, we regard Sri Lanka as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-cultural state; ● and although we are convinced that the solution to this conflict can and must be negotiated by Sri Lankans, we stand ready to assist in ways the principal parties find appropriate.

These then are the essential views of the US Government regarding Sri Lanka's conflict. Please take them for what they are worth. This is your country, your future and you, Sri Lankans, must decide in which direction to go. But as a friend of longstanding, the United States offers these views for your consideration.

Within these broad official US parameters, there are of course many nuances. One of these regards our view of the LTTE. The French have a wonderful word, *lucidite*, whose metaphorical meaning is the ability to face facts. One of the facts we must face is that although we regard the LTTE as a terrorist organization and do not believe it is the sole representative of the Tamil people, we accept that the leaders of the Tigers will be involved in the negotiations. This is because of the LTTE's military standing.

Let me also say a word about the wish for separation. Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict in a sense is a planetary drama. As Salman Rushdie has written, cul-

tures collide constantly in the modern world, crisscrossing at high velocity; one moment we are in a village with a charming sense of remoteness; in the next, we turn on TV and are connected instantly to a global village. In this confusion, it is entirely understandable that some people want to retreat into a community where everyone believes the same thing.

But as I said at the outset, such a retreat was possible for Odysseus. It is not possible, or even desirable now. My father used to say that we find comfort from those who agree with us - growth from those who don't. Diversity, having to cope with differences, tolerating the points of view of others, and accepting that all of us have multiple identities - ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic, sexual, professional and, yes, geographical - this is the normal state globally, including here in Sri Lanka.

In the years before the American Civil War, "abolitionists" wanted slavery abolished. But that could not be done immediately, so some of them favoured abolishing the American nation lest they be sullied by further association with the slave states. That would not have helped the slaves, but helping slaves was not their primary concern. A sense of purity - rightmindedness - was. Those in Sri Lanka who advocate separation of the state long for ethnic purity, a genetic and geographical impossibility. Worse than that, it is an atavism, a denial of the harmonizing, connecting forces at work in the modern world. These ethnic hygienists, or separatists, are about the past, not the future - or at least not a future that we should wish for our children.

As I reflect upon the prospects for peace in Sri Lanka, I must say that I regard the coming months hopefully. I have lived in several ethnically diverse nations and regions - Romania, South Africa, the West Indies, Yugoslavia, Belgium, India, and, of course, the United States and I am struck not by the hopelessness of Sri Lanka's dilemma but by how tractable and soluble it is. The differences - believe it or not - are not all that great. Sri Lanka's various ethnic groups have lived to-

gether on this lovely island, mainly peacefully, for many centuries. All that is needed is to find a mutually satisfactory, contemporary political system to accommodate the island's diversity. In making this perhaps surprising assertion, I do not minimize the difficulties. Among the Sinhala and the Tamils, there are ethnic supremacists to be sure. Certain people in Colombo and Kandy have told me Sri Lanka is for the Sinhala; in Trincomalee and Batticaloa and here in Jaffna, I have heard that northeastern Sri Lanka is Tamil terrain. Such views are extreme. They remind me of the man who regards the American flag and only sees the colour red; he is not describing the American flag in all its multi-coloured glory. I am by no means an expert on your country, but it seems to me obvious that Sri Lanka - north, south, east and west - is a diverse nation.

Perhaps I am wrong, but I believe most Sri Lankans accept that this is a complex nation and that they also believe its people can live together peacefully. Serious thinking about how to get from here to there is in order. Among other challenges, the Sri Lankan Government must find a way to make the Tamils and other minorities feel welcome and secure in Sri Lanka while assuring those who are worried about secession that the territorial integrity of the state is inviolable. In this part of Sri Lanka, meanwhile, I have heard some people, who tell me they support democracy, express support for the LTTE, an essentially military entity with an ugly past of killing those who disagree with its leadership. Can the LTTE be transformed into a democratic, political, non-violent organization? If it can, those who have seen it at its ugliest and those who are opposed to its tactics, including the United States, will be obligated to reconsider how they regard the LTTE. Certainly, we can even today acknowledge that there are encouraging indications in the LTTE's recent conduct. We hope that the LTTE will continue to refrain from attacking civilian targets and respect the other basic rules of conflict. If anyone in this audience has contact with the LTTE leadership, please convey

two messages from the U.S. Government: A: If the LTTE is still fighting for Tamil Eelam, please accept that that goal cannot be achieved; and, B: If the LTTE really cares about the Tamil people and about assuring their rights, giving up violence and negotiating are the way to go.

A new world is developing in Sri Lanka, like a Polaroid photograph, a vivid surreal awakening. The effect is contradictory: a sense of sunlight and elegy at the same time, of glasnost and claustrophobia. The reality of the last nearly 18 years - conflict and hardship - could be giving way to something new, something more tranquil. "All changed, changed utterly" in W.B. Yeats' smitten lines about the Irish rebellion of Easter, 1916. Eighty-five years later, the Irish troubles proceed but there is hope. The eczema of violence in Ireland fades and peace is at hand.

Perhaps the same is true in Sri Lanka. The heroes of the coming months will be those who advocate tolerance, not violence, those who see the need for compromise and moderation rather than those who wish to push ahead toward unattainable visions of separation and exclusivity.

As I said at the beginning, we are all subject to the interconnectedness of things in this modern world. This includes Sinhala, Tamils, Muslims, Burghers and all other Sri Lankans, who have more in common with each other than the extremists suggest. On the Great Seal of the United States you will find the Latin phrase, "E Pluribus Unum," which means, of course, "Out of Many, One." Even more than two centuries ago, the founders of the United States saw that our country would be diverse and we should reject efforts to stress differences among its people. The idea was and is that diverse people can come together and build one country, one nation. I think Sri Lanka can do it, too. The United States fervently hopes that you all can come together again and live in peace. Pluralism and prosperity, as with other diverse societies, will then keep you united. Thank you. ●

International Support For Peace Process

Dr. S. Narapalasingam

Norway's help was solicited by both the Sri Lanka government and the LTTE to facilitate direct talks between them with a view to reaching a political settlement of the protracted conflict. The Norwegian Government appointed Erik Solheim, the leader of the Socialist Party as the Special (Peace) Envoy. Having resigned his seat in the Storting (Parliament) for the purpose of working full-time on this mission, he has been functioning as the facilitator since February 2000. He has also been keeping the Opposition and UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe and the Indian government informed of the efforts being made to bring both the warring parties to the negotiating table. In view of India's concern for her position in the region and interest in the final resolution of the conflict in Sri Lanka, this task is also recognised by other countries as necessary for achieving the desired aim.

Nationalism at a price

The political parties against Norway's involvement are mainly the JVP and the Sihala Urumaya. A section of the Buddhist clergy and some nationalists are also against 'foreign intervention'. So far questioning Norway's motive and casting doubt about the credibility and integrity of the envoy/facilitator has not affected the peace efforts. Their stand is influenced by nationalistic feelings, ignoring the seriousness of the national problem and the need for finding a permanent solution that is crucial for the future well-being of the country. It is this attitude that has retarded the pace of progress in Sri Lanka since independence.

Despite receiving considerable foreign aid for more than two decades, Sri Lanka's development record is unimpressive compared with many Asian countries whose earlier levels of per capita income and human development were in some cases below ours. They are now more prosperous and advancing

steadily. Besides the existing challenge of alleviating poverty, Sri Lanka is facing new challenges emanating from increased competition in the world market and the present aspirations of the people for better living conditions comparable with those obtaining in other countries. But these seem to be of little concern to the nationalists anxious to retain majority rule and rights, which they consider as essential for safeguarding their race and religion. It is not surprising that the rest of the world has not taken seriously such bigoted views that only hinder peace and progress.

International Support

Strong support has been extended to Norway (not a member of the European Union - EU) by all the governments interested in the future of Sri Lanka as an undivided, peaceful and prosperous island in which all the diverse ethnic and religious groups can live in harmony, have equal rights and opportunities and prosper freely. They are also interested in improving democracy, human rights, the rule of law and country's economic and financial management, all these having suffered since independence as a result of cutthroat and divisive politics of the main parties. Long-term interests of the country were sacrificed for short-term political gains.

The last meeting of Sri Lanka Development Forum held in Paris during December 18-19, 2000 which was attended by 24 donor countries and international organisations¹⁾ emphasised the urgency to settle the ongoing conflict and create the conditions conducive for socio-economic development. These with the building of efficient institutions and economic infrastructure were considered as critical requirements for reducing poverty and improving the lives of all people in Sri Lanka.

All delegates to the forum pointed out the deep linkages between poverty and conflict. Social exclusion driven by

ethnicity, language or religion had resulted in reduced opportunities over decades and created the extreme tensions which drove conflict. Repeated references were made to "the perceived gap between official policy and commitment on the one hand and, on the other, the voices on the ground in Sri Lanka". Apparently, this "disconnect" has given a sense of frustration among the donors. Government was urged to build efficient institutions acceptable to all Sri Lankans. The forum considered the recent talks between Norwegian officials and the LTTE as a new window of opportunity for a resolution of the conflict. Norway's efforts have the full support of the donor countries.

The opening address by Ms. Mieko Nishimizu, Vice President, South Asia Region, the World Bank contained some elementary lessons in good governance, leadership, people's participation, teamwork, quality growth with equity and social harmony and "working for the sovereign people of Sri Lanka". She quoted from the speeches of President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, drawing attention to her concern about the regression that had taken place in the country transforming it from a peaceful and tolerant nation to one overwhelmed by ethnic, political and social violence. Delegates were also reminded of the President's urge to build a new nation where peace and richness of the diversity of the people will be the foundation for strong and stable economic development.

She explained the circumstances that have compelled the donor community to come to the assistance of Sri Lanka in its efforts to solve the major problems that are hindering peace and economic and social progress. Their interest in the domestic affairs is confined to those matters influencing directly peace and development. The fact is that without peace, development cannot be sustained and without meaningful (to all ethnic groups in the society) development, there cannot be lasting peace.

She affirmed that in the end any solution must be of Sri Lanka's own, to which foreign partners could contribute their knowledge and experience. For this to happen, the donors wanted the present efforts of Norway a fellow member to succeed.

European Union

The declaration of the European Union (EU) at the Paris meeting, while confirming its readiness "to provide constructive support to the Sri Lankan Government in its endeavour to restore peace in the country," evoked the attention of the government to the urgent need to act effectively on several areas to improve the observance of human rights and to rid the shortcomings in government that are hampering the country's development. The Sri Lankan Government was also reminded of the 16 post-election recommendations made by its "observer mission" which need to be implemented "to guarantee greater transparency in future elections."

The EU statement referred specifically to the murder of 27 Tamil detainees in the Bindunuwewa rehabilitation camp on 25 October 2000 who were under the protection of Sri Lankan authorities and asked the government to do its utmost to bring to justice the murderers. In general, the EU wanted the Sri Lankan Government to identify and bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations in the country. At the same time, the EU reiterated "its firm condemnation of the terrorist acts and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the LTTE. Attention was also drawn to the "extreme social, moral and physical precariousness" of the displaced persons.

EU while backing Norway's "facilitator" mission in Sri Lanka, stressed the urgency of a national consensus on a peace plan. In conclusion, the EU invited the parties to start negotiations without delay, "taking substantial account of the aspirations of the Tamil minority and not breaching the intangible principle of the territorial integrity and unity of Sri Lanka." It also expressed the hope that LTTE's announcement to enter into peace negotiations with the Government is sincere and will result in meaningful talks.

The delegation from the European Parliament that visited Sri Lanka during February 18-24 stressed the need for both sides to support the Norwegian facilitator for the peace process to begin. The delegation was led by Gerard Collins, MEP, from Ireland and the other parliamentary members were

Thomas Mann, Robert Evans, Erika Mann and Maria Martins and four officials who accompanied them. The delegation visited Jaffna and Kandy where they met the Chief Prelates of the Malwatte and Asgiriya Chapters. Before leaving Gerard Collins said at a press briefing, human rights were very high on the European Union's agenda and urged Sri Lanka to push through democratic reforms and improve its human rights record. The EU delegation expressed its regret that there had so far been no convictions on the Bindunuwewa detention camp massacre.

Terrorism and LTTE

Collins also said that the EU has urged Britain to ban all terrorist groups. The commitment of the EU to uphold the principles of the European Convention for Human Rights is evident from the observations made in Paris and Colombo on Sri Lanka. Despite the concerted efforts of Tamil parties in Sri Lanka and campaigns abroad by LTTE supporters urging the British Government not to proscribe the LTTE, it was included in the list of 21 terrorist organizations recommended for proscription by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw on February 28. Terrorism Act 2000 that came into force on February 19 forbids a wide range of activities that support terrorism²). It is an offence to belong to any of the banned groups, support or raise funds for them. Maintaining offices and using London for transferring money for terrorist actions are also forbidden. Collins' earlier comment in Colombo that a British ban on the LTTE would not affect the ongoing Norwegian bid to bring Sri Lanka Government and the LTTE to the negotiating table signalled Britain's decision, though many did not expect it to be announced so soon.

In fact, the European Parliament's stance on the LTTE was known much earlier from its resolution on Sri Lanka which noted - "over the years the so-called Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have carried out indiscriminate acts of terrorism throughout Sri Lanka, claiming many hundreds of civilian lives." Not only the European countries but also others committed to democracy will not approve moves seen as destabilising or undermining the democratic political structure in Sri Lanka (not-

withstanding its present weaknesses). Will those who encouraged the LTTE to proceed vigorously along this path realise at least now their blunders?

The Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2000 (on Sri Lanka) released by the US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour in February 2001 must be read in full to understand their interests in championing Democracy and Human Rights throughout the world. The report is critical of both the Sri Lanka Government and the LTTE. With regard to the latter, the report states - "The LTTE continued to attack civilians. The LTTE continued to commit serious human rights abuses in the ongoing war with the Government. The LTTE regularly committed extrajudicial killings, including killing prisoners taken on the battlefield, and was also responsible for disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrest, detention and extortion". It is true that these same charges apply to the government security forces as well but this has not helped to portray the LTTE differently as the victim of state terror for obvious reasons. Moreover, the report mentions - "Through a campaign of killing and intimidation, the LTTE continued to undermine the work of the local government bodies in Jaffna whose members were elected in free and fair elections in January 1998." Such obstructive acts have been viewed as undermining democracy.

Conclusion

During President Chandrika Kumaratunga's official visit to India from February 22 to 25, Indian leaders stressed that a negotiated political settlement was the only way to restore lasting peace which would meet the aspirations of all groups in the multi-ethnic Sri Lankan society. India has also consistently stood for the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. By keeping India informed of the developments in the efforts being made by Norway and also having discussions at the highest level on the ethnic issue, Sri Lanka has seen to it that nothing is done contrary to India's interests in the region. LTTE was banned in the USA in October 1997. Nevertheless like India and Britain, the US also believes that the only way to find a permanent solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is through a negotiated

settlement. A positive development that is apparent now is the willingness of the LTTE to settle the conflict peacefully, respecting the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. By ceasing all offensive attacks, it is anxious to create a favourable climate for launching the peace talks.

Although the "confidence building" measures suggested by Norway as a necessary prelude for the planned talks on the substantive issues have not been agreed by the government, the indications are that the process of reaching an agreement is under way. President Chandrika Kumaratunga herself mentioned in a recent interview (Frontline

March 3 - 16, 2001) that we have now "the best window of opportunity that has been offered to any government since the war began". Now that the dispute over banning the LTTE in Britain is settled, concerted efforts should be directed towards resolving the conflict through the process of negotiations for a new political structure. All the causes that led to it in the first place and then to its escalation as well as the fears of each community about their future in Sri Lanka must be considered and ways found to remove them.

Sri Lanka's ethnic problem evoked the attention of other countries, following the government sponsored anti-

Tamil pogrom in 1983. Any solution now has to win the support of India and other countries providing development assistance to Sri Lanka. The situation that exists now is very different from that prevailed during the previous peace talks that collapsed for well known reasons. Not only the people in Sri Lanka but also others interested in restoring peace in Sri Lanka will not condone the side seen as unreasonable, uncompromising and intransigent. The present time is, no doubt, a decisive moment for Sri Lanka; the well-being of the country and all the inhabitants depends crucially on the way the leaders settle the self-destructive conflict.

Footnotes:

- 1) The Forum was attended by delegates from (list of participating countries) - Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. International organizations present included Asian Development Bank, European Commission, European Investment Bank, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Finance Corporation, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Monetary Fund, Kuwait Fund for Economic Development, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Saudi Fund for Development and the United Nations Development Programme. As usual, the meeting was chaired by the leader of the World Bank team.
- 2) Under Part II of the Terrorism Act 2000, the Secretary of State has the power to proscribe any organisation which he believes 'is concerned in terrorism'. An organisation is 'concerned in terrorism' if it commits or participates in acts of terrorism, prepares for terrorism, promotes or encourages terrorism or is otherwise concerned in terrorism either in the UK or abroad. 'Organisation' is defined as including 'any association or combination of persons'. The Home Secretary said that the Act has brought the UK provisions in line with the European Convention for Human Rights.

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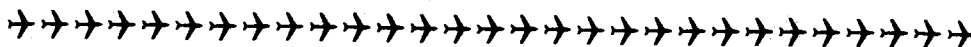
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The Indian Position on the LTTE Ban

T.N.Gopalan

The British Home Secretary Jack Straw's recent announcement including the LTTE in the list of foreign organisations to be banned has been greeted with a deafening silence in India.

Not a word from any quarter, neither the government of India nor that of Tamil Nadu or yet the various avowedly pro-LTTE parties like the PMK and the MDMK would open their mouths on the issue.

The Indian media chose to ignore a report in Sri Lankan newspapers quoting Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar as saying that India too had lobbied for the ban in the UK. Sri Lanka had sought India's assistance to mount pressure on London, but New Delhi had on its own taken up the issue, Kadirgamar said, according to some agency reports.

"I took it up with India's External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh and he told me they had already taken up the matter with Britain," Kadirgamar told reporters. "That is a particularly friendly gesture by India," he said adding, "We owe a deep debt of gratitude to India. Unsolicited by us, Jaswant Singh made representations to the British government for the banning of the LTTE." If Kadirgamar has been quoted correctly, certainly that marks a dramatic turn-around in the National Democratic Alliance government's stand on the militant group. This is the first time since Atal Behari Vajpayee came to power back in 1998 that the Centre has chosen to position itself so completely as an adversary of the Lanka's Tamil Tigers, and so openly in support of the Government in Colombo.

Having to depend on such Tamil Nadu parties like the PMK and the MDMK which make no secret of their admiration for the Tiger supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran, the Vajpayee government has always tread a very cautious line on the LTTE issue until recently. (The PMK quit the NDA only last month, but that was out of its compulsions in Tamil Nadu and the decision had nothing to do whatsoever with the Tigers.)

Even the DMK which, these days, makes a show of its "patriotism" and attacks the LTTE on various counts, has never allowed the Centre to adopt any

position which might be overtly supportive of the Lankan government. One can recall the furore in the state when there were reports that President Chandrika was seeking the support of the Indian government to fend off the Tigers from recapturing Jaffna in April last year.

In the circumstances it is clearly mystifying why India should have intervened on its own and ask the UK to ban the LTTE. It would be quite a while before this particular mystery unravels, if it ever does, that is. But there seems to be a pattern emerging, slowly but steadily; the Vajpayee government's policy towards Sri Lanka is increasingly dictated by North Indian bureaucrats who have always tended to view the LTTE as a forbidding menace, the most charitable perspective being that they are an avoidable nuisance. Mr. A.P. Venkateswaran, Foreign Secretary under Rajiv Gandhi and who quit in a huff at the height of the IPKF-LTTE confrontation, has repeatedly lashed out at the "complacent, self-centred, ill-informed and insensitive" approach of the mandarins in the North Block towards any issue affecting the south. He himself is a Tamil Brahmin, a tribe not exactly well disposed towards the Tigers or anything touching upon Tamil nationalism in general. Madhavan Kutty, a noted south Indian journalist based in New Delhi, has echoed Venkateswaran's views in his much-praised book on his experiences in the national capital.

Still how come a coalition government like that of Vajpayee's could muster such a temerity as to fly in the face of some pet sentiments of its constituents?

It may be useful to recall here that even during the 1998 polls when both the MDMK and the PMK trooped into the NDA under the AIADMK's leadership, they had claimed to stand by their commitment to the Tigers and an independent Eelam even though Jayalalitha herself was seen as being violently anti-LTTE. When they switched camps a year later, there was even less reason to be restrained, for "is not Kalaingar Karunanidhi a Tamil champion at heart whatever his compulsions and some of his administrative actions?" The PMK is once again back in the AIADMK camp now while Vai.Ko is sticking to the DMK.

Surely whatever the configuration at any given point of time, the PMK and MDMK, both with some mass base in the state, have tended to champion the LTTE cause, to a lesser or greater degree. Karunanidhi himself could be less vocal and may have his own reasons to be hostile to the Tigers, but his Tamil identity politics would never allow him to endorse any action "which would jeopardise the larger interests of the Lankan Tamils." But at the same time it bears iteration for the nth time that the commitment of these parties remain only at the rhetorical level, they very rarely bothering to apply any real pressure on the Centre to make it act in favour of the LTTE.

The Jaffna crisis of last year was perhaps a solitary exception when they could ensure that India would not militarily intervene in favour of a beleaguered Lankan armed forces. How the Centre would have reacted if the situation had indeed deteriorated and the Tigers tightened the noose, is a very different story altogether.

There was even a self-serving report recently on President Chandrika's visit to India claiming India had "advised" the government of Sri Lanka to refrain from attempting a military option towards resolving the ethnic crisis and instead keep on pursuing the current peace process facilitated by Norway. Cautioning Colombo about pursuing the military option, New Delhi made it known that "an escalation of the conflict could result in creating new tensions that may cause unsettling consequences for India." No Indian commentator has made such a claim so far. But even assuming that Vajpayee had proffered such a piece of friendly advice, it would only go to show the Janus-faced approach of successive governments in New Delhi. They make pious declarations over the plight of the Lankan Tamils, but with little follow-up action. On the other hand they go to great lengths to make life difficult for the LTTE, whether banning it here or lobbying for a ban in the US or the UK.

The point is that the BJP has quietly shifted from an overtly pro-Tiger stance to a more conventional approach. There is indeed a significant section within the party which generally roots for the LTTE as part of its Hindutva. The notorious Shiv Sena leader, Bal Thackeray, rarely misses an opportunity to pay glowing tributes to the valiant Velupillai Prabhakaran. When the Sena took out a barely-noticed Rath Yathra supporting the Tigers, Then Seidhi, an organ of the Thamizh Thamizhar Iyakkam, gave it a prominent coverage. When some of his supporters demurred over projecting such a

rabidly communal organisation, Pazha Nedumaran, chief of the Iyakkam, reportedly shot back, "What's the big deal about it? What do we care what their views on other issues are? We must accept support from whichever quarter it come." Besides another question raised by the pro-Tiger lobby is, "The Congress could be obsessed with bringing to book the assassins of their leader. Why should we be constrained by such considerations? Anyway the upper caste Lankan Tamils are increasingly moving towards a Hindutva position and the Tigers do not oppose such a trend."

It was such a fringe group which seemed to be calling the shots for sometime as seen in a retired pro-BJP Foreign Office official's open call during a tour of Lanka for greater autonomy to Tamil areas. Last year the group firmly opposed any move to go to the rescue of the Lankan armed forces. But the Prime Minister's Office is getting increasingly autonomous and the bureaucrats there are functioning as super bosses, giving little leverage for the BJP leaders themselves, leave alone the much more tentative allies. The ban on the LTTE has been renewed; a formal request was made for the extradition of Prabhakaran in connection with the Rajiv murder trial; a person suspected to have had a role in the assassination of Neelan Thiruchelvam was bundled into a plane bound for Colombo; a prominent Tiger-supporter, Eelavendan, was deported; and, now finally, in the case of the UK ban - it is clear the bureaucratic lobby, with its obsession with "India's security interests," is in tight control of the situation.

External Affairs minister Jaswant Singh himself is an odd man out in the Parivaar, with no great ideological commitment one way or another. He had no compunction in normalising ties with the Myanmar junta. Whether it is Israel or Saudi Arabia or the USA or even China, Singh's moves seem to be dictated by real politik and he is backed strongly by the Prime Minister though the RSS might look askance at him.

In such a situation, those like George Fernandes have little option but to swallow their pride and not to make an issue of it whether it is Myanmar or China or Sri Lanka. If such stormy petrels prefer to lie low in order to protect their own interests, little needs to be said of the likes of Vai.Ko. and Ramadas whose professions are far more suspect.

Vai.Ko apologists keep asserting that he is doing whatever he could within the constraints he is facing and that the Tigers appreciate it. If the most enthusiastic votary of the LTTE prefers silence as the most effective weapon, that only goes to show how much the Tigers have squandered the goodwill they once had on this soil; what the Mishras and Jaswants think and do are of little consequence in this regard.

Films Help Fan the Flames of Hatred

By Muddassir Rizvi

ISLAMABAD-After fighting over Kashmir on the diplomatic front for decades, Pakistan and India have taken their dispute into movie theaters, which critics say will only fuel animosity among their people. A series of films released in the past few months by the Pakistani film industry, popularly called "Lollywood", have themes centered on allegations of human rights excesses by Indian security forces against the people of Indian-administered Kashmir.

"These movies are our rejoinder to a number of Indian films that linked Pakistani forces and intelligence agencies to subversive activities on Indian soil, particularly the insurgency in the disputed Kashmir territory," wrote film critic Shahid Naqvi, in the Urdu-language newspaper Ausaf.

But not all associated with Pakistan's film industry agree that the medium should be used for political purposes. "We should use the popular medium of films to reduce rifts and differences among people," says Ejaz Gul, managing-director of the government-run National Film Development Corporation. He believes that films have potential to create wars. "Since the people of India and Pakistan have access to each other's movies and television programs, the producers should seize the opportunity to promote peace and harmony, instead of catching on to the themes that fuel hatred," he adds.

Pakistani journalist Najeem Haider Zaidi, who works with a domestic news agency, agrees. "Peace is not an isolated effort made by governments," he points out.

The release of these films coincides with renewed efforts by the governments of the two South Asian neighbors to resume peace talks stalled since their undeclared Kargil border war two years ago. Pakistan, which was created on the basis of religion, claims Kashmir-Hindu-majority India's only Muslim-majority province. The two nuclear weapons-capable nations have fought two wars over Kashmir since the former princely state joined India, soon after the subcontinent's partition by departing colonial British rulers in the year 1947. Pakistan administers a third of Kashmir.

For over a decade, armed secessionists have unleashed a violent campaign in the Kashmir Valley in India's Jammu and Kashmir state, which has killed more than 35,000 people so far. New Delhi accuses Islamabad of training and arming the militants, while Pakistan accuses Indian security forces of rights excesses in Kashmir.

However, a large number of cinema viewers in Pakistan think that Lollywood's new productions, Teray Piya Mein (In Your Love) and Musalman (Muslim), are a fitting response to similar films made by the Indian film industry. "A number of Indian movies have put down Pakistan and its forces over the last few years. These movies were nothing but a bunch of lies," says Nadia Rehmat, a student in a local girls college. Still showing in cinema halls after its release in December 2000, Teray

Piya Mein is about an Indian Sikh girl who falls in love with a Pakistani boy during a visit to Sikh holy shrines in Pakistan. Her Pakistani lover follows her to India where he is caught by an Indian army officer, who is also in love with the Sikh girl. The film ends with Kashmiri militants helping the Pakistani boy escape jail and cross the border into Pakistan with the Sikh girl. In keeping with the Pakistan government's allegations against Indian security personnel in Kashmir, the film shows the Indian army officer torturing the Pakistani man in jail.

"I am glad that Pakistan has finally started using cinema for rousing feelings of nationalism in the young people," says Begum Tasadduq, an elderly woman who watched the film in Islamabad. "India has made many movies against freedom fighters in Kashmir that are viewed by our youth. I feel that the government should patronize such efforts that portray the true feelings of the Pakistani nation," she adds.

She was referring to the high popularity of Indian films Roja, Border, Mission Kashmir and Refugee in the Pakistani home video market. These films, which depict the Indian view of the Kashmir issue, are being secretly rented after a ban by the government, which dubbed them as Indian propaganda.

"We cannot give out these movies though we get frequent demands," says an attendant at a home video rental in Islamabad. Films made by India's Hindi cinema industry, known as "Bollywood", are highly popular in Pakistan. Teray Piya Mein is not the first effort of famed producer Shahzad Gul to cash in on the anti-India sentiment in Pakistan. A year ago he produced the highly successful Ghar Kab Aao Gey (When Will You Return Home?) that dealt with subversive activities, allegedly carried out by Indian intelligence agencies in Pakistan. "The success of the movie has made me work on such themes as I realized how a majority in this country thinks," Gul said in a press interview.

What Gul did not mention was the help he got from the Pakistani Army's Inter Services Press Relations department in filming many of the scenes. Teray Piya Mein was also made with the technical support of the military's public relations department. The military's press relations wing has also given financial and technical help to state-run Pakistan Television in the filming of the popular drama series Angaar Wadi, (The Valley of Flames), which deals with the operations of the Indian security forces in Kashmir.

Critics, however, say that by cashing in on such sentiments, the producers of these films are hurting efforts to build trust between the people of Pakistan and India. "What are we trying to achieve through these movies? Simply, indoctrinating people that we cannot live in harmony with people across the border," says Zaidi.

(IPS- Asia Times, 27 February 2001)

BULLDOZING THE BUDDHAS OF BAMBIYAN

Yoginder Sikand

The destruction of the giant Buddhas of Bamiyan by Afghanistan's Taliban rulers has been greeted with shock, horror and anger by almost the entire international community. Even Pakistan, one of the only three countries to have recognised the Taliban regime, and its major sponsor, has reacted sharply to the news. Unfazed, the zealously iconoclastic one-eyed Mulla Omar, the self-styled 'Amir' of the 'Islamic Emirate' of Afghanistan, has now gone ahead and announced that all statues and 'false gods' in the country, including priceless artefacts lying in various museums in the country, would meet with a similar fate.

This comes at a time when Afghanistan has been racked by a devastating earthquake, a continuing and seemingly never-ending civil war, the collapse of all civic services and almost total isolation from the rest of the world - that is, at a time when what the Afghans most need is support from the outside world to help build their war-ravaged country which today has the dubious distinction of being one of the poorest in the world. Following the bull-doing at Bamiyan, whatever little public concern there was for the plight of the hapless people of Afghanistan seems to have vanished with one fell swoop. Deeds speak louder than words, and despite the Taliban's loud and deafening claims of being ardent champions of Islam, there can be little doubt that their actions have done the greatest disservice to the faith that they claim to profess, only helping to reinforce the stereotypical images that most non-Muslims have about Islam.

Islam, at least as I know it, certainly does not allow for the destruction of the places and objects of worship of others. 'There is no compulsion in religion' is a cardinal tenet of the Quranic revelation. What the Taliban has done, then, has no Islamic sanction. Rather, it goes against

the very tenets of Islam. This is all part of a piece. First we were witness to an orgy of violence in western and central Afghanistan let loose by Taliban hoodlums against the country's Shia minority, in which thousands of Shias lost their precious lives.

Then, the banning of women from schools and employment and from the public sphere in general, which resulted in reducing thousands of already starving families into complete destitution.

Then, the conversion of the country into the world's largest producer of opium, the consumption of which Islam sternly prohibits, but justified by the wily Mulla Omar on the grounds that most of the dreaded drug made its way, in any case, to western, non-Muslim hands.

Then, reports of the Taliban's involvement in the sponsoring and training of various terrorist groups, parading as crusaders for Islam. And now the brutal vandalism at Bamiyan.

We have reached a point that demands that all of us, particularly Muslims concerned about the way the fair name of Islam is being sullied in order to pursue an agenda of blind hatred and terror, must raise our voices before the monster swallows us up. Islam is uncompromising in its monotheism and in its opposition to idolatry, and this indeed is its greatest strength. Yet, this faith in the one God who is beyond all human efforts at representation is, according to the Quran, to be tempered with a broad tolerance of other's beliefs, no matter how wrong they may seem. Thus, the Quran at some point warns the believers that they should not revile the idols and deities of others, lest this should provoke them to revile Allah in turn.

One needs only to glance at the reporting in the press about the vandalism at Bamiyan to see what the Taliban's

latest antic has meant for the way non-Muslims perceive Islam. Mulla Omar insists that in destroying the Buddhas of Bamiyan he is simply following in the path of the Prophet Muhammad, who, once he had conquered Mecca, proceeded to destroy all the idols in the Ka'ba.

This analogy might at first sight seem compelling, but it has actually little to commend for two reasons. Firstly, because the Ka'ba, to begin with, was, as Islamic tradition has it, built by the Prophet Abraham as a shrine for Allah and had no idols in it. Graven images were installed only later by the Meccans, and in doing away with the idols the Prophet was only restoring to the Ka'ba its former sanctity.

The Buddhist shrines at Bamiyan are a completely different category. Secondly, the Prophet proceeded to destroy all the idols in the Ka'ba only after all the denizens of Mecca had converted to Islam, that is, when they had renounced their faith in their pagan idols. Their new faith insisted on the worship of a formless God, and it was then that the Prophet ordered that all the 365 images that had been installed in the Ka'ba be destroyed. To argue that Islam demands that Muslims should go about hammering down graven images and idols worshipped by others, as Mulla Omar seems to suggest, is thus a complete travesty of Islam itself.

I see little difference between the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban and the demolition of the Babri Masjid by Hindutva hoodlums in India. Both are impelled by a blind hatred, an irrepressible intolerance for the 'other', a menacing zeal for a cause that is a complete travesty of true religion and genuine spirituality.

Their celebration of hatred, of the killing of innocents, of the reviling of other faiths and of endless violence is a new idol that demands the incessant sacrifice of innocent human blood at its altar. This new idolatry is far more sinister than its predecessor, for it comes in the guise of an iconoclastic zeal speaking the language of religion but subtly, and, at times, as at Bamiyan now, brazenly, working to subvert it from within. It is this new idol that must be hewn down.



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MATRIMONIAL

Tamil Catholic parents seek handsome groom for fair, pretty daughter, 29, part qualified accountant in employment in London. Religion no bar. Please send details. M 1227 c/o Tamil Times.

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Jaffna Hindu parents seek qualified groom under 35 for their daughter Ph.D., British Citizen, an innocent party to annulment, no encumbrances. Contact M 1233 c/o Tamil Times.

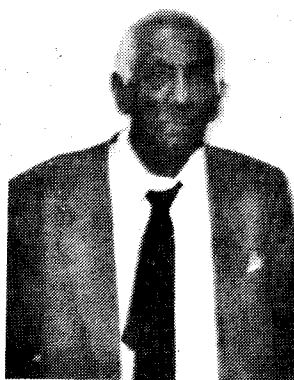
OBITUARIES



Mr. Muttucumar Jayaseelan, (Chartered Accountant) of Alaveddy, Sri Lanka; beloved husband of Saradha; loving father of Praveen and Pradeesh; son of late Mr. V.S. Muttucumar and of Mrs. A. Muttucumar; son-in-law of late Dr. A.R. Breckenridge and of Mrs. Pathma Breckenridge; brother of Jeyarajasingham (Uduvil), Pathmaranee

Rajanayagam (New Zealand), Ranji Sinnadurai, Vanitha Winslow, (both of Australia), Jeyasothy Paul (Colombo), Jeyanithy Kirubanayagam (Australia) and Rajee Rajasingham (Canada) passed away in Lusaka, Zambia on 19th February 2001. Funeral service took place on Saturday 24th February at **The Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Lusaka** followed by burial at Leopards Hill Cemetery, Lusaka.

The members of the family thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes, messages of sympathy and provided support in various ways during the period of bereavement. - Mrs Saradha Jayaseelan, P.O. Box 31892, Lusaka, Zambia. Phone +260 1 291385. Email: jpraveen@zamnet.zm



Mr. Somasundram Sivagnanam (92) Attorney-at-Law and Notary Public of Chankanai, Sri Lanka, presently resident in London, eldest son of late Mr. Kanthapasegarar Somasundram and Valliammai of Kanthappa Valavu, Valveddy; son-in-law of late Mr. Ponniah and Theivanayagi of 'Cathiresu Vasa', Church Road, Chankanai; beloved husband of Devi; brother of Mr. Mylvaganam (Malaysia), Mr. Mahadeva (Valveddy), late Mrs. Sivakolunthu Sivasubramaniam and late Mr. Kathiresu

(Valveddy); loving father of Gnanadevi (UK), Kulanayagam (Germany), Kengadevi (UK), Somasundaram (Canada), Nirmalathasan (UK), Sivagumar (UK), Ravindran (UK), Mahesan (Canada), Sri Ram (Canada), Ganesan (New York), Kaladevi (UK) and Sri Jeyadevi (UK); father-in-law of Sivagnanasekaram, Selvaran-chitham, Subramaniam, Suseela, Jeyadevi, Lalithadevi, Bavani, Suchitra, Shantha, Sivananthan and Nanthakumar; loving grandfather of Ranjan, Mohan, Keerthi, Caneshan, Kalyanie, Jeyakaroshan, Thanujah, Gavusala, Karnan, Kavitha, Selina, Selwyn, Bharathy, Rangan, Uma, Eeshan, Sangeetha, Milani, Vaanathy, Harrisan, Siyamini, Suban and Aran passed away on Friday, 2nd March 2001. The funeral rites were performed on 8th March at Merton Hall, Kingston Road, London SW19 and later the cremation was at Putney Vale Cemetery, London SW15. Mrs. Devi Sivagnanam and

all family members wish to thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes, messages of sympathy, assisted and supported them during the period of bereavement. They regret their inability to thank them individually. - 43 Lynton Road, New Malden, Surrey KT3 5ED.



Mrs. Someswary Kanagasabai, beloved wife of the late Mr. S.A. Kanagasabai, Retired Accountant; loving mother of Chandra (Colombo), Indra, Logendra (both of UK),

continued on page 31

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Yogendra, (Colombo), late Kulendra, Ambi, Gowri, Jayanthi (all of UK), mother-in-law of Kamaleswary (Indra), Rathy, Yoga, Frank Ragu and Glyn Lewis passed away in London on 17th March 2001 and was cremated.

The members of the family wish to thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy and assisted them in several ways during the period of bereavement. - 21 Rose Walk, Purley, Surrey CR8 3LJ. Tel: 020 8660 1522.

IN MEMORIAMs**First Death Anniversary**

In treasured Memory of **Mr. Kulandavelu Subramaniam**, formerly of the Survey Department, Colombo.

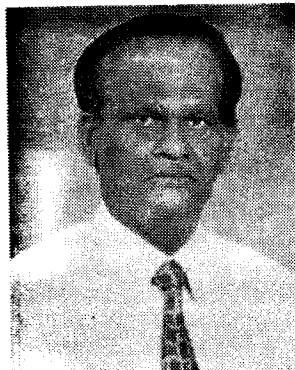


Born: 23.05.1923

Died: 09.03.2000

**Deep in our hearts your memory is kept
You were loved too dearly to ever forget**

Fondly remembered by his loving wife, children and sisters.

Fourth Death Anniversary

Appa

Four years have gone by, since you left our midst. Your

loving care and inspiration are strongly missed. In your peace we find solace.



In loving memory of **Miss Rathini Ananthamoorthy**, Lecturer, Eastern University of Batticaloa on the ninth anniversary of her passing away on 5th March 1992.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by her parents Ananthamoorthy and Yogarani; brothers Sivapalan and Sivakaran; sisters Mathini, Malini, Rajini, Sivarubini and families. - 2070 Camilla Road Apt. 609, Mississauga, Ontario L5A 2J7, Canada. Tel: 905 279 0918.



In loving memory of **Mrs. Nallammah Kulanayagam**, beloved wife of the late Mr. V. Kulanayagam (Deputy Government Analyst, Colombo) and the loving daughter of the late Mr. Kandiah (Upper Balangoda) and late Nallammah, on the first anniversary of her passing away on 4th March 2000 at the age of 86 on Mahasivarathiri Day.

She served as a devoted mother to Pathma (Australia), Dr. Ganeshanayagam (Sri Lanka), Dr. Shanthi (UK), Logi (Canada), Siva (UK), and mother-in-law of Ratnasabapathy (Julius and Creasy, Sri Lanka), Pama (Australia), late Dr. Parameswaran, late Mr. V.

Mariathasan (Rubber Metal Technique - Malaysia), Ilamugan MBE (Customs and Excise - UK) and grandmother of Radeesh, Thushara, Sahana and Arwin.

She will be fondly remembered and sadly missed by all who have known her. - 60 Portland Avenue, New Malden, Surrey KT3 6BA.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Apr 3 11am Colombuthurai Yoga Swamigal Abisekham and Guru Poojah followed by Prasatham at Shree Ganapathy Temple, 123 Effra Road, London SW19. All Welcome.

Apr 4 Eekathasi.

Apr 5 Pirathosam; Feast of St. Vincent.

Apr 6 Pankuni Uththiram - Parwathy Kalyanam.

Apr 7 Full Moon; Feast of St. John Baptist.

Apr 11 Sankadakra Sathurthi.

Apr 13 Good Friday; Visuyarsha Hindu New Year; Sashti; Feast of St. Martin.

Apr 16 Easter Monday.

Apr 20 Pirathosam.

Apr 21 Feast of St. Anselm.

Apr 22 4pm Kokuvi Hindu College O.S.A. (UK) Annual Cultural Show at Archbishop

continued on page 32

In Memoriam**Pradeep Jeganathan - Fourth Anniversary**

Born: 01.12.1964 Tragically Taken Away: 31.03.1997

**Time moves on and days pass us by
To live with our grief so hard we try
Fond memories of you no one can steal**

The pain and the anguish only God can heal.

Sadly missed and lovingly remembered by his parents Jeganathan and Shakuntala; sister Mythili; brothers Janarthana and Sanjayan and their families.

In Loving Memory of our

Daddy
Ponnampalam
Kanagaratnam
Born: 11.10.1909

Mummy
Vemalaranee
Kanagaratnam
10.07.1923



Rest: 02.03.1982 31.03.1990

**We speak of you with Love and Pride
Years may pass and time may fly
Memories of you both will never die
And shall live in our hearts for ever.**

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by sons Sara, Brem and Dubsy; daughters-in-law Lalitha and Shyamala; grandchildren Janarthan, Mehala, Uthistran, Arani and Anuja. - 19 Huxley Place, Palmers Green, London N13 5SU. Tel: 020 8886 5966.

continued from page 31

Lanfranc School Hall, Mitcham Road, Croydon. Tel: 01293 881181/020 8761 0358.

Apr 23 Amavasai; Feast of St. George Patron of England.

Apr 25 Karthigai; Feast of St. Mark.

Apr 26 Sathurthi.

Apr 29 Sashit; Feast of St. Catherine of Siena.

Apr 30 Feast of St. Pius.

Mr. E. Rajakulasuriar - A Tribute at his funeral on 13.2.01

Mr. Eliyathamby Rasakulasuriar, Retired Chief Mechanical Engineer, Ceylon Government Railways was born in 1917 at Ariyalai, Jaffna and had seven brothers and sisters. He had his early education at St. John's and St. Patricks Colleges, Jaffna before proceeding to Colombo for his higher education at St Joseph's College. He married Kamalambikai in 1955 and had five children, two sons and three daughters, who are happily married and settled in life.

Mr. Rasakulasuriar joined the Chief Mechanical Engineer's Department as an apprentice in 1935, when he was 18 and was sent for a two year course of training at Jamupur in India. On his return, he rendered several years of meritorious service in the department and was appointed Chief Mechanical Engineer, the highest post he could have aspired for. Mr. P. Rajagopal his predecessor and Mr. B.D. Rampala the then General Manager and a strict disciplinarian were very appreciative of his devotion and efficiency. He won the hearts of all those who came in contact with him, especially his subordinates and no one had a bad word for him. He seldom lost his temper and put every one at ease. When he retired in 1972, he was accorded a grand farewell by his staff. He was unassuming, humble and unselfish. He was a dedicated social worker too and as the General Secretary of the Tennis Club in Moor Road, Wellawatte organised competitions for the welfare of its members.

Mr. Rasakulasuriar migrated to the UK in 1990. He was elected Patron of the Sri Lanka Railway Past Employees Welfare Association UK at its inaugural meeting held on 20th June 1995 and functioned as such till his death. He was the guiding force of the association, took an active interest in all its activities. He along with his wife attended the last Christmas celebrations of the association held on 9th December and joined in the fun and frolic and enjoyed themselves. I believe this is the last function he attended.

On behalf of the Association, my wife and myself; I extend our deepest sympathies to his wife and other members of the family on their loss and pray that the Almighty grant them the strength to bear the loss and the courage to face the future with equanimity and fortitude.

'Life on earth is only a passing phase

in the infinity of time'.

May his soul rest in peace.

M.Balasundram.

Australian Newsletter

Balendra Elected Deputy Mayor



Mr. Balendra who is the first Sri Lankan Tamil to be elected a councillor of a Local Government Authority in Australia has been elected the Deputy Mayor of Auburn in Sydney. He migrated to Australia in 1986 and has since then been interested in educational and cultural activities. He founded Tamil Study Centres in different parts of Sydney and has over 500 students enrolled in them. He was the Conference Secretary of the hugely successful 5th International Conference on Tamil Culture held in Sydney in October 1992 and is also an active member of the Saiva Manram which built a large Hindu Temple near Paramatta. He was the secretary of Australian Tamil Foundation and President of Sydney Tamil Resource Centre.

Mr. Balendra is a Financial Advisor and his wife Jaya known for her social education and cultural contributions is the owner/director of Lidcombe and Regents Park Pre-schools in Sydney.

Tradition, Religion, Aspirations and Culture: A national Hindu conference was held in Sydney from Friday 26th to Sunday 28th January 2001 by Hindu TRAC (Tradition, Religion, Aspirations and Culture) and the main theme was 'Hinduism and my Aspirations'. The focus of the conference was on empowering youths and a remarkable feature of it was that it was mainly organised by Hindu youth. Ten young Hindu men and women made excellent speeches making them interesting using computerised graphics.

There were three keynote speakers - Dato. J. Jagadeesan from Malaysia, Dr. Suresh Govind, an academic from the University of Malaysia and Dr. K. Dharmaratnam, author of a number of books on Hinduism. Spiritual talks were complemented by cultural demonstrations and interactive workshops provided youth and adults the opportunity to explore various aspects of the theme. Attendance was free of charge.

In addition to talks and entertainment, there were demonstrations of 'How to wear a Sari', 'How to tie a Veshti', 'How to cook vegetable curries' etc. These demonstra-

tions were well attended, especially by young people. Dozens of Hindu youth were volunteers serving food, giving directions and compering the programme. On Saturday, 27th January, lunch was cooked and served to hundreds of people by the youth. Adults were greatly heartened by the enthusiasm shown by the young people for their religion and culture. Many older people who felt that their children were abandoning their religion and culture were pleasantly surprised by the commitment shown by the youth and the efficient way in which the events were organised.

Since Friday, 26th January was a Public Holiday, the events were spread over three days. The auditorium of the University of Western Sydney was packed every day morning and evening. Both parents and young people are looking forward to next year's conference.

The National Co-ordinator for the Community of Hindu TRAC, Australia is Mr. Krishnan Nair and the conference co-ordinator Mr. Vargeese Thillainathan.

Canadian Newsletter

Trauma of Methusam: Eighteen-month old Methusan succumbed to the deadly bacterial meningitis after paramedics had failed to assess the seriousness of the infant's condition. The first emergency crew called by the infant's parents Seevaratnam and Jeyarani of Scarborough, Ontario failed to rush the infant to the emergency services of the local hospital. When the condition grew worse, the parents called 911 again at 1.30 am. and had to literally beg the ambulance crew to take Methusan to hospital. The mother, a registered nurse herself, who was waiting at the door with the baby in her arms when the three paramedics arrived, told them that her child needed immediate hospital attention. She was met with the retort, as reported in The Toronto Star of 18th February that it would be a waste of time.

When the child was finally taken to Toronto East General Hospital, the emergency doctor accosted the parents with the words: 'Why did you get late to get here'. When Methusan was finally transferred to the world famous Sunnybrook Hospital for Sick Children, it was too late for him despite all the efforts made by his parents to rush him to hospital.

The paramedics involved have been placed on administrative jobs, pending investigation. A spate of shocked letters appeared in the national and local newspapers following the media coverage of this tragedy.

Victor Karunairajan, Canada.

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DPK Group acquires 37% of George Steuarts

A UK based investor acquired a 37% stake in Sri Lanka's oldest business establishment, (George Stuart & Co. Ltd. (founded 1835) housed at 45, Janadhipathi Mawatha, on 12th February. Dubby P. Kanagaratnam, representing the DPK Group located at 'DPK House' in London bought over the holding of the Merchant Bank of Sri Lanka in the company, following a decision by that Bank to divest all of its non banking investments.

The DPK Group is a widely diversified financial institution offering management, advisory, and financial services to companies and corporate clients both in the UK and overseas. The Group arranges finance for investments in residential and commercial properties and in business enterprises.

Chairman of the DPK Group, Mr. Kanagaratnam, said that his company was delighted to make this investment in such a long standing and highly reputed organization, as his board saw the long term potential for considerable growth in an already diversified and stable portfolio. 'There are additional overseas investments that we intend to bring into Sri Lanka and see George Steuarts as an excellent name to group these with and to help build the company into a conglomerate to be on par with the "blue chips" in Sri Lanka.'

The two nominees of the investor who will serve on the board of George Stuart & Co. Ltd. are Gamani Abeysuriya, the former Marketing Director of Singer Sri Lanka, who has now relinquished that position to take up his appointment as Executive Director with George Steuarts, with effect from the 1st March, 2001, and Roy Dacosta, a property developer from West London.

The Chairman of the George Steuarts Group, S. Skandakumar, said that his board was pleased to welcome the new investor and observed that it also provided an opportunity to re-establish relationships with British interests, one which dominated the company's history in its first 140 years.

'It took us time to overcome the consequences of the nationalization of plantations in 1975, since their management was the company's only line of business at that time. The group has since successfully diversified into new areas of businesses. Despite the devastation caused by the Central Bank bomb explosion in January 1996, we have consolidated the group's activities due largely to the efforts of loyal and dedicated teams of management and staff in our various operations'.

However, the Chairman added that the continued closure of Janadhipathi Mawatha for normal vehicular traffic was having its impact on business and expressed the hope that Sri Lanka's prime business centre would return to normalcy in the near future.

'We are confident that along with our new investor we will be able to achieve the

objectives that have now been mutually identified and agreed upon' he added.

Skandakumar also placed on record, his appreciation of the contribution made by the Merchant Bank of Sri Lanka during the period that they held a stake in the company.

The reconstituted Board of George Stuart & Co. Ltd. will be: S. Skandakumar (Chairman), J. M. Wimalagoonaratne (Managing Director), R. Wickramasinghe (Finance Director), Gamani Abeysuriya (Executive Director), G. E. S. Dirckze, and Roy Dacosta.

The group's current activities comprise airline ticketing, inbound and outbound travel, import and distribution of pharmaceuticals, export and local marketing of tea, manufacture of telephones and support services for installations, import and distribution of motor spares, freight forwarding, airline representation, overseas employment, insurance and education.

Sakthi Sangamam



Sakthi Sangamam, a dance programme consisting of Classical Bharata Natyam and Dance-Drama was performed by thirty students of Natya Shethra Dance School on 18th February 2001 at the Winston Churchill Hall, Ruislip, UK in aid of Shri Kanaga Thurrkai Amman Temple, Ealing.

Smt Shanthi Thayaparan, the director of the school, choreographed the dance-drama which was well received by the audience. Smt Ambika Thamotheram composed the music and gave vocal support. The other accompanists were Sri P. Rathiruban - Mridangam, Sri. T. Ragavaraman - Flute, and Sri Kartik Ragunathan - Violin.

Honour him for what we can do today

Claude Shannon, a mathematician, in his Master's thesis described how digital information could be transmitted by automated switching circuits. In 1948, he published 'A Mathematical Theory of Communications', which was the foundation of information theory, which developed the concept of communicating in binary code. This was the basis of the entire digital communication revolution, from cell phones to the Internet. Dr. Shannon even developed the concept of error correction, which makes

the communications accurate. Without him, none of the things we know today would exist. The whole digital revolution started with him. He was 84 when he died on 24th February.

Inpathamil Oli Broadcasters Set New Record

International history was made on Sunday, 28th January 2001 by two radio broadcasters Suresh Joachim and Bala Prabhakaran of 'Inpathamil' Australian 24 hour Tamil Radio Station in Sydney, Australia when they established a new world record by their non stop live broadcasting for 85 hours.

They entered the Guinness Book of Records beating the previous record of 73 hours and 33 minutes set by Greg Dainess in London last year.

The unique broadcast linked up live with Canada and the UK. They had played 602 song requests from listeners and accepted 876 calls from well wishers / callbackchats.

They were hosted and honoured at a mayoral reception by Joe Tannous, Mayor of Burwood.

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