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A jubilant victorious
Mahinda Rajapakse (top left)
the defeated
Ranil Wickremasinghe (top right)
the President & Prime Minister
Ratnasiri Wickremanayake (right)
roadblocks and violent scenes
in the northeast marked
boycott of elections
on 17 November





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right to say it"*

- Voltaire

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Challenges facing the President

Widespread pre-poll and post poll violence accompanied by a variety of electoral malpractices has been the hallmark of all the elections held in Sri Lanka since 1977. The unprecedented post poll orgy of violence unleashed following the August 1977 general election that brought the late J R Jayawardene to power at the head of the victorious United National Party (UNP) inaugurated in the island's electoral history a phase of institutionalized political violence becoming a regular and ugly feature of the electoral process during almost every subsequent election. So much so, "election monitoring" by local NGOs and by hordes of invading foreign monitors developed into a familiar and necessary practice to ensure that the elections held were "free and fair". In contrast, it must be said that, even factoring into the equation the violent incidents in the Northeast of the island where the LTTE sought and virtually succeeded in imposing an enforced boycott, the November 17 presidential election, according to international monitors, was the best conducted, the least violent with no major incidents of violence or electoral malpractices being reported, most orderly and "free and fair" election to be held in recent years.

In the Northeast, the LTTE first said that the presidential election at which whichever candidate was elected was of no concern to them, and announced that the Tamils were free to vote to anyone they preferred. This was followed by repeated calls by several LTTE front-organizations that instructed the people not to take part in the elections. Then there was clear evidence that the LTTE was seeking to enforce a total boycott of the election by violent and intimidatory means.

The scale and intensity of the violent incidents were such that the European Union Monitoring Mission, fearing for the safety of their members, withdrew them after two separate bombing incidents in the east of the island. In their report, the Mission said that "voting in the North and East was marred by violence accompanied by an enforced boycott by the LTTE, resulting in an extremely low voter participation in many areas." The report said there was extremely low participation of voters from the LTTE-controlled areas and also in government-controlled areas in the North and East and that EUEOM members observed this in Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Jaffna, Mannar and Batticaloa districts. It explained that a joint statement by the LTTE and the TNA on November 10 in which they had said that 'it is futile to show any interests in the elections' created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty in these areas. It added that in order to ensure that no ambiguity existed as to what the LTTE wanted to happen in reality, they enforced this boycott by creating an environment which was rife with violence and intimidation. "The LTTE does not like anybody to take away its command over the people in the north-east", Head of the EU team Mr. John Cushnahan said adding "The LTTE has to be rightly and strongly condemned for preventing the franchise of people in North and East. We cannot justify what it did to people by obstructing their right to vote by intimidating them and creating violence."

The violent means adopted to achieve an effective boycott of the poll has resulted in the virtual disfranchisement of the Tamil people of the Northeast. Had this not happened, many analysts have expressed the view that the outcome of the poll would have been different. Taking account of the marrow majority with which Mr Mahinda Rajapakse has

become President, it is argued not without justification that if not for the LTTE's enforced boycott, it is Mr Ranil Wickremasinghe who would now be occupying the Presidential Palace. Instead, Mr Rajapakse just managed to snatch victory from the jaws of certain defeat thanks to the machinations of the LTTE.

In his acceptance speech following his swearing-in as the fifth executive President, Mr Rajapakse, has promised to usher in a "New Sri Lanka" in which he "as President will not be a leader that belongs exclusively to any single party or group. I will not discriminate on party, colour and racial or religious grounds."

On the most intractable issue of war and peace in Sri Lanka, he struck a positive note reaffirming his "commitment and determination to pursue the peace process to achieve an honourable peace that will respect the aspirations of all communities in our country," and said the peace that he envisaged would "ensure human rights of all and multi-party democracy in our country." Declaring that he was "ready to engage the LTTE in discussing a political solution when the LTTE declares their readiness to resume negotiations," the President reaffirmed the "Government's continued commitment to the Ceasefire and my Government's readiness to review the operations of the Ceasefire, as soon as the LTTE is ready to do so, in order to effectively enforce its provisions especially those relating to political killings, abductions, child soldiers and other human rights." The President also made it clear that he "would replace the hitherto held bilateral approach to peace with a multi-party approach" and "would take steps to accommodate due representation of the interests of both the North and the South in the talks." He also reassured the religious minorities that religion and the state would be separate and there would be equal treatment of all religious communities.

In terms of ideas, sentiments and intentions what the President has outlined seems quite laudable. But they will mean nothing if they are not translated into deeds.

The President will no doubt realize that the "Old Sri Lanka" he inherits, comprises a much polarised and deeply fragmented society. No one can underestimate the constraints, problems and challenges that confront the new President. It must be recognized that he did not secure an overwhelming mandate from the people in the recent poll. The narrow majority he got demonstrates this.

It is also a fact that the ethnic minority political parties like the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress and the Ceylon Workers Congress did not support Mr Rajapakse's candidature and the substantial majority of their followers voted for his rival, Mr Ranil Wickremasinghe. The voting figures also demonstrate that the majority Sinhalese

community remains "near-equally divided" as between Mr Rajapakse and Mr Wickremasinghe.

One of the important tasks of the new President therefore has to be to build a broad consensus among a divided people and seek alliances with parties representing the minority communities.

In his campaign Mr Rajapakse was supported by a coalition of over two dozen parties with contradictory policies, and some of these parties adopt strident Sinhala nationalist positions which do not conform to the vision of a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and a pluralist society. The President will face the impossible task of seeking to reconcile the irreconcilable positions of his coalition partners. What is certain is that he will not be able to pursue the peace process or create his "New Sri Lanka" if he allows himself to be held hostage to the forces of ethnic and religious extremism in the south.

The other major challenge facing the President is the reality of the LTTE's hold over the northeast of the island. At the time the Ceasefire Agreement was signed in February 2001, the LTTE's hold was by and large limited to the areas under its control as stipulated in that Agreement. However, during the four years since the ceasefire, it has been possible for the LTTE to territorially extend its power-base and achieve de facto hold over the people even in government-held areas of the Northeast. The way the LTTE was able to enforce its boycott call throughout the Northeast during the recent presidential poll is ample demonstration of the hold the LTTE has in these areas. The LTTE is unlikely to countenance without confrontation any attempt to alter the current position.

There are other elements in the President's speech that are likely to be resisted by the LTTE and may thwart his intention to revive the peace process. These elements include (a) any solution should be based on power-sharing within a unitary set-up; (b) seeking assistance from India and other Asian countries for the peace process; and (c) the peace process must be more inclusive and involve all stakeholders rather than being limited to the Government and LTTE.

The reaction of the LTTE to the new President and his positions on the resumption of the peace process will probably be spelt out in the LTTE leader's 'Heroes Day' annual statement on November 27 which is much anticipated.

In this rather unpredictable situation, one hopes that the main parties, the Government and the LTTE, will realize that war is not an inevitable option and that they will commit themselves to the maintenance of the ceasefire which has lasted nearly four years saving thousands of lives, and try again and again as long as it takes to bring about a peaceful and just political solution. □

Election Review

Mahinda assumes Presidency

Following his victory at the presidential polling held on 17 November, Mahinda Rajapakse assumed office as the new Executive President of Sri Lanka after he took his oath of office as the 5th President of Sri Lanka at 1:20 pm (0720 GMT) on Saturday, 19 November, before Chief Justice Sarath N. de Silva at the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo.

Addressing the nation after being sworn in, the new President said, "I am a new leader and mine will be a new government, and will build new Sri Lanka."

Stressing that his policy would be to maintain the ongoing cease-fire, the President pledged to revive peace talks with the LTTE and achieve national consensus for a "honourable peace" to end the long-running ethnic conflict. Rajapakse said that he would be ready for peace talks with the LTTE when the Tigers said they would be ready to return to the negotiating table. "I will start talks with the LTTE and consult all political parties to achieve peace," Rajapakse said, adding that he would continue getting international assistance for the peace efforts.

A profile

Mahinda Rajapakse, born on November 18, 1945, hailing from a well known political family from southern Sri Lanka, reached the highest elected office in the country, that of Executive President, on his 60th birthday. He has followed in the footsteps of the earlier generation of Rajapakses that produced the 'Lion of Ruhuna' D. M. Rajapakse, who was followed by not less than seven members of the family elected to the State Council and the Parliament.

Mahinda Rajapakse was the youngest member to be elected to Parliament in 1970, at the age of 24 years, from the Beliatta electorate which his father represented from the State Council days, 1945 to 1965. Mahinda has held the offices of Minister of Labour, Minister of Fisheries, Opposition Leader and Prime Minister.

The Rajapakses of Giruwapattuwa is the single political family of Sri Lanka to be represented in the same electorate for over 65 years with the D. M. Raja-

pakse, D. A. Rajapakse, George Rajapakse, Lakshman Rajapakse, Mahinda Rajapakse, Chamal Rajapakse and Nirupama Rajapakse elected from the Giruwapattuwa.

Rajapakse has played many a role in and out of the House in a political journey running over thirty years. Rajapakse was the Director of the Human Rights and Legal Aid Centre and the Secretary of the Human Rights and Fundamental Rights Committees of MPs. He is also the Chairman of the Sri Lanka Committee of the Palestine Solidarity Movement.

Rajapakse is a lawyer by profession, having studied at Richmond, Nalanda and Thurstan Colleges. He holds a Diploma from the prestigious Prague Trade Union School.

Mahinda is married to Shiranthinee Wickremesinghe and a proud father of three sons.

Having entered the House of Representatives in 1970, he represented the same seat which his father D.A. Rajapakse represented from 1947-60.

A Trade Unionist he is, Rajapakse was forging ahead with the formulation of the Workers' Charter when he was removed from his portfolio as Minister of Labour.

Rajapakse became the Opposition Leader when the People's Alliance was defeated in the General Election 2001. He was appointed Prime Minister after the SLFP-JVP coalition swept to power in the Parliamentary Polls in 2004. Rajapakse was sworn in as the Prime Minister on April 6, 2004.

The Central Committee of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party nominated Rajapakse as the Presidential Candidate to contest the recently held election which he won with a narrow margin defeating his main rival Ranil Wickremesinghe. Many feel that his election to the country's paramount political position points to the shift of power within the SLFP and the country.

New PM, Anura dropped

Veteran politician Ratnasiri Wickremanayake (72) was sworn-in as Sri Lanka's Prime Minister on Monday, 21 November, before President Rajapakse. He replaces Mahinda Rajapakse who was

elected President of Sri Lanka at the November 17 election. The Cabinet of the previous UPFA Government stood dissolved with the assumption of office of the new President.

This is the second time that Wickremanayake was elevated to the Premier's Office. He was earlier appointed Prime Minister in 2000 by then President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga replacing the then incumbent Sirimavo Bandaranaike.

By appointing Wickremanayake, Rajapaksa has disregarded an earlier decision by the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) to appoint Foreign Minister Anura Bandaranaike as Prime Minister if Rajapaksa wins the Presidential election.

Rajapaksa had to break this agreement because Bandaranaike opposed his policies on the ethnic question, and questioned the wisdom of his alliance with the JVP and JHU. Anura also had not extended his full support in Rajapaksa's election campaign. However, Anura Bandaranaike, though he might have been disappointed and even bitter, was present at the new PM's swearing-in ceremony.

Rajapaksa's choice fell on Wickremanayake only at the eleventh hour, according to senior SLFP leader, Alavi Mowlana. Earlier, the frontrunner was D M Jayaratne who was Minister of Posts and Telecommunications in the previous government. Like Rajapaksa, he had been a loyalist of former Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike and was sidelined by President Chandrika Kumaratunga.

Eventually, Wickremanayake won the race on account of his wider acceptability. He would also be a link with Chandrika Kumaratunga and the Bandaranaises, who founded and led the SLFP since its inception in the 1950s. Kumaratunga is still the President of the SLFP.

Wickremanayake, who entered parliament in 1960, had been Prime Minister earlier from August 2000 to December 2001 under the Presidentship of Chandrika Kumaratunga.

Speaking to journalists after being sworn in, acknowledging the contribution made by the people to elect Rajapakse as the President, Premier Wickremanayake said, "But, they should not stop there. They should continue with their responsibility to push the Government and the President to do what the country needs."

Wickremanayake first entered Parlia-

ment in March 1960 contesting the Horana electorate from the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna. In the July 1960 Parliamentary election he again successfully contested the Horana electorate as an Independent candidate. Having joined the SLFP in 1962 he successfully contested the 1965 and 1970 General elections and became MP for Horana.

He was the Deputy Minister of Justice, Minister of Justice, and Minister Plantation Industries in the United Front Government of Sirimavo Bandaranaike from 1970 to 1977.

After losing the 1977 election he re-entered politics in 1993 having contested the Western Provincial Council and became a Minister of the Western Provincial Council in which Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga was the Chief Minister.

An experienced administrator, he has held the portfolios of Public Administration, Plantation Industries, Parliamentary Affairs and Home Affairs of the PA Government in 1994. He was appointed Prime Minister in October 2000. He held the Ministerial portfolios of Public Security, Law and Order, Buddhasana, Agriculture and Deputy Minister of Defence in the UPFA Government.

A former General Secretary of the SLFP, Wickremnayake is described as a hawk in matters concerning the LTTE. As the Buddha Sasana Minister in the last administration, he introduced a bill to ban forcible and fraudulent conversion of poor Buddhists and Hindus to Christianity by evangelical groups, most of whom are foreign funded.

Parliament prorogued.

Sri Lanka Parliament was prorogued at midnight on 21 November and would ceremoniously reopen on 25th at 10.30 am with the address of the President as its main item in the order business.

The former Finance Minister Dr. Sarath Amunugama government had already presented to the Parliament the budget proposals for the year 2006 few days before the presidential election. But President Rajapakse has decided not to go ahead with that budget as he wants to include in the budget at least some of the proposals in his election manifesto in the new budget.

It was confirmed that Government found it difficult to annul the budget proposals already before the Parliament and they had to continue with the second reading when the parliament sessions started on 21 November. Therefore according to sources close to the Presidency, it was concluded that proroguing was the

only solution. available to deem the already presented budget abandoned. The new budget is expected to be presented to the Parliament on the 29th of this month.

Also according to sources close to the Presidency it was revealed that the Government has decided to continue with the Emergency for another one month. The emergency motion is scheduled to be discussed in the Parliament on the 25 November.

European Union UK Presidency

The UK Presidency of the EU notes the results of the Presidential election in Sri Lanka on 17 November and extends its warm congratulations to the new President.

"We will continue to support the people of Sri Lanka and their new President as they address together the challenges that lie ahead.

"We note the public statement of the EU Election Observation Mission and condemn the violent incidents which marred what was otherwise a peaceful campaign. We also deeply regret reports that people in the north and east of Sri Lanka were prevented from exercising their democratic right to vote by the actions of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

"The UK Presidency of the EU calls on all sides in Sri Lanka to demonstrate their commitment to peace by maintaining the ceasefire and working together towards a peaceful settlement of the ethnic issue that meets the aspirations of all communities in Sri Lanka."

Indian President and PM

Indian President Abdul Kalam and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh hoped ties between India and Sri Lanka would be strengthened following Mahinda Rajapakse assuming office as the President of the island nation.

In his message of congratulations to Rajapakse, Kalam said: "Sri Lanka and India enjoy excellent bilateral relations in all spheres. I am sure that under your able leadership our two countries will be able to cement and strengthen it further."

He also wished for peace and prosperity in Sri Lanka.

A foreign ministry statement said Premier Singh telephoned the Sri Lankan President and told him that he "looked forward to working together with Rajapakse in further strengthening bilateral relations," and "looked forward to welcoming him to India at an early date."

United States

The US State Department in Washington D.C. has issued a statement congratulating President Mahinda Rajapakse.

The statement says: "The United States congratulates Mahinda Rajapakse on his victory in the November 17 presidential election and commends those citizens of Sri Lanka who peacefully exercised their democratic rights and responsibilities. We remain committed to maintaining the historically close ties between our two countries.

The United States looks forward to working with President Rajapakse as he confronts many significant and immediate challenges. These include the need to strengthen the Ceasefire Agreement and bring renewed vigour to the peace process so that progress may be made towards a negotiated solution that meets the aspirations of all Sri Lankans.

The United States regrets that Tamil voters in the northern and eastern parts of the island did not vote in significant numbers due to a clear campaign of intimidation by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). As a result, a significant portion of Sri Lanka's people were deprived of the opportunity to make their views known. The United States condemns this LTTE interference in the democratic process."

Solheim congratulates

Norwegian Minister of International Development and the Norwegian special envoy to the Sri Lanka's peace process, Erik Solheim, warmly congratulated Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse on his election as President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Solheim said that "the Norwegian government looks forward to continuing our close cooperation with the new president and the Government of Sri Lanka in a wide range of areas, including support for efforts to achieve a lasting peace that inspires confidence in all Sri Lankans."

Noting that Mr. Rajapakse had received a mandate from voters to work towards a negotiated political settlement of the conflict, Solheim extended assurances of strong international support as the new president grasps the key challenges of preserving the ceasefire with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and taking forward the peace process.

"The Government of Norway is deeply committed to promoting peace and reconciliation internationally," Solheim said. "Norway remains willing to facilitate the peace process in Sri Lanka for as long as the two parties request such assistance, and for as long as it is

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Also exciting is the fact that Carlton Leisure was shortlisted with three other firms for the 2004-2005 Asian Achiever's Award in the category "Small and Medium Business" held on 27th Oct 05. This is a major achievement for a company that has been turned around in a mere four years and now has four offices including one in the fashionable West End.

When the company was purchased, 99% of its business was with Sri Lanka's national carrier. In a short four years Carlton Leisure has spread its wings far and wide and today it is the main agent for over 15 major airlines while tickets for some 100 airlines could be purchased through the Carlton Leisure website.



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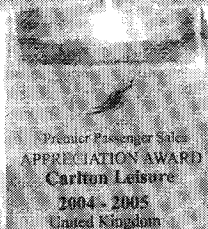
Recently it struck deals with three other major airlines- the Italian airline Alitalia, Brazil's premier carrier Varig and Argentina's Aerolineas Argentinas. Bringing Varig and Aerolineas Argentinas into its operations is an indication of the direction in which Carlton Leisure is headed.

Having launched out into package tours covering many traditional and well-known destinations in Asia, Africa, the Pacific and Middle East, the company's decision-makers made up their mind to make a foray into South America, a continent that has remained largely unknown to many tour operators especially travel agents of Sri Lankan origin.

Carlton Leisure's success has been its imaginative approach to travel and tourism and its readiness to experiment with generally uncharted destinations. South America, especially Brazil the continent's emerging super power, is one of those regions that Carlton Leisure ventured into and it has proved a success.

Still it is not only the decision-makers' willingness to strike out into the relatively unknown that has made Carlton Leisure an imaginative and successful tour operator. It is also the personnel that man the four offices in London and its surroundings.

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possible for Norway to play a constructive role."

Canada congratulates

Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew welcomed the successful conclusion of elections for the President of Sri Lanka which took place on November 17, 2005.

"The Government of Canada congratulates Sri Lankans on the election of a new President and is encouraged that, in most parts of the country, people were able to vote in high numbers. However, Canada expresses disappointment in the boycott that was called by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and the use of violence and intimidation to prevent the participation of Sri Lankans, particularly Tamils and Muslims, in areas controlled by the LTTE."

Mr. Pettigrew also reinforced Canada's willingness to assist in the peace process and called upon President Rajapaksa and his government to continue to pursue a peaceful, politically negotiated solution to the country's civil war.

Catholic Bishops

The Catholic Bishops Conference while congratulating Mahinda Rajapakse,

on his being elected the 5th Executive President, has said they believe he would remain committed to the positions endorsed in his manifesto.

In a letter addressed to Rajapakse, dated 19, November 2005, The CBCSL said: "It is with honour that we extend our best wishes and congratulations to you on your election as the fifth Executive President of Sri Lanka.

You bring to the office of President a strong commitment to human rights, which you championed steadfastly as a young politician. In public office and private life you demonstrated a personal disposition of simplicity and openness, a virtue common to all religions in our country. We are confident that you will guide our country to the path of peace inspired by such personal qualities.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference in its letter of 25 October 2005, urged the Catholic community to be guided by the manifesto of the presidential candidates in their decision at the election. We believe that you will remain committed to the positions endorsed in your manifesto, especially your commitment to human rights, religious freedom and equality. We are also keen to establish the Inter-Religious Council that you have proposed as a means to foster religious harmony. We

have always followed a policy of non-confrontation on issues of concern and would like to re-affirm our continued commitment to this approach.

We commend the conduct of this election which, as far as we are aware, was not marred by violence, however, we regret that a section of our population was unable to exercise their franchise. We consider it a grave violation of a person's right to participate in the process of governance. We wish you God's Blessings in your onerous responsibilities as our Head of State."

EU monitors condemn poll boycott and violence

European Union (EU) election monitors has unreservedly condemned the LTTE for denying the rights of voters in the North and East at the November 17 Presidential Election through intimidation and violence and called it a totally 'undemocratic' and 'unacceptable' act.

"The LTTE has to be rightly and strongly condemned for preventing the franchise of people in North and East. We cannot justify what it did to people by obstructing their right to vote by intimidating them and creating violence", European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) Chief Monitor John

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Cushnahan said.

A report issued by the EUEOM quoted that 'voting in the North and East was marred by violence accompanied by an enforced boycott by the LTTE, resulting in an extremely low voter participation in many areas'.

The report said there was extremely low participation of voters from the LTTE-controlled areas and also in government-controlled areas in the North and East where Tamil voters reside and that EUEOM members observed this in Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Jaffna, Mannar and Batticaloa districts.

It explained that a joint statement by the LTTE and the TNA on November 10 in which they had said that 'it is futile to show any interests in the elections' created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty in these areas. It added that in order to ensure that no ambiguity existed as to what the LTTE wanted to happen in reality, they enforced this boycott by creating an environment which was rife with violence and intimidation. "The LTTE does not like anybody to take away its command over the people in the north-east", Mr. Cushnahan said.

CMEV calls for re-poll in North and East

The Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) has called upon Dayananda Disnayake to use the powers vested in him as Commissioner of Elections to call for a re-poll of the north and east in order to ensure that a truly free and fair election of the Chief Executive of Sri Lanka has taken place.

Referring to Section 103(2) of the 17th Amendment to the Constitution that mandates the Commissioner to ensure the conduct of a free and fair poll, CMEV says in terms of the Presidential Elections Act of 1981 and the Elections (Special Provisions) Act of 1988, is especially so in circumstances which could affect the outcome of the elections.

"We draw your attention also to Article 21(2) of the Elections (Special Provisions) Act, which refers to the need for a re-poll where due to an emergency or unforeseen circumstance the poll for the election of a District cannot be taken."

"We hope that you will consider the circumstances of violence and intimidation that accompanied the Presidential polls in the Northern Province and in the Eastern Province on November 17 and call for a re-poll in keeping with the powers vested in you by law," it said in a

letter to the Elections Commissioner.

The letter further stated: "(CMEV), having fielded teams of mobile election monitors as well as monitors in many of the polling stations throughout the north and east on election day November 17, 2005 strongly feels that the environment that prevailed during the election campaign and on Election Day in the north and east were not conducive to the conduct of a free and fair election.

"There are two separate situations that we would like to address in this regard.

"In the North, the major issue was that of intimidation of voters through diverse means including the distribution of posters and leaflets that aggressively discouraged people from going to the polls. This led to the total turn out of the polls in the Jaffna District, for example, being as low as 1.5% of the total number of registered voters.

"In the East, too, persons from areas under LTTE control were denied access to the transport - buses and ferries that had been made available by the government in order to enable them to travel to the cluster polling stations set up in government-controlled areas.

"However, in addition, there were acts of violence that took place on the night prior to elections and throughout election day that terrorized and intimidated people from going to the polls."

No mandate, says Ranil

The UNP's presidential candidate Ranil Wickremesinghe said that no candidate at presidential election had received a mandate since they had failed to obtain 50 per cent of the valid votes cast. "Taking into account the number of voters who were prevented from exercising their franchise in the North, East and South of the country, no candidate has received the statutory 50 per cent of the vote required and therefore no one has a mandate," Wickremesinghe told a media briefing in Colombo.

He said that hundreds of thousands of eligible voters outside the North and East were intentionally omitted from the register of electors and they could not exercise their fundamental right to vote. "We will be taking up these matters with both the Elections Commissioner and the EU."

Wickremesinghe, said that the 4,706,366 votes cast for him was a mandate for peace and his policies.

Asked whether he will continue as UNP leader, Wickremesinghe said that it

was the party that elected him. "I like to see how Mahinda Rajapakse will sip tea with Prabhakaran and resolve the North-East issue," he quipped. Asked why the LTTE had prevented the northern and eastern voters from casting their ballots, Wickremesinghe said it was only the LTTE that could reply the question.

Ranil stepping down?

The main opposition candidate defeated in the Sri Lanka presidential elections, Ranil Wickremesinghe, has decided to step down from the leadership of the United National Party (UNP) and as Leader of the Opposition in parliament, according to party circles. It is said that the party's deputy leader Karu Jayasuriya is to take over the leadership in parliament and in the country.

UNP parliamentarian Rajitha Senarathne said Ranil Wickramasinghe will also step down as the leader of the opposition in the parliament. He told the BBC that the party leaders have suggested deputy leader Karu Jayasuriya to be appointed new leader of the UNP.

Parliamentarian Senarathne, however, added that the UNP will not change its economic policy and the stance taken on Sri Lanka's national question. "The UNP will continue to consult Mr. Wickramasinghe on policy matters."

The UNP leaders have also suggested that the senior positions such as Chairman and General Secretary should be held by active politicians, instead of officials close to the leadership.

Mr. Wickremesinghe who led the UNP since 1994 has faced several parliamentary elections and two presidential polls and was unsuccessful on many of these occasions. Some commentators have characterised the UNP leader as "a born loser".

At the recently held presidential poll, he obtained 48.43% of the votes against President Mahinda Rajapakse's 50.29%.

However some senior members and some party organizations have requested Mr. Wickremesinghe to reconsider his decision as they feel such a move would further weaken the UNP. A final decision regarding the future leadership of the party will be taken after meetings of the working committee and the parliamentary group of the party.

A strong request has also been made especially by the minority allies asking Mr. Wickremesinghe to retain his post as UNP leader which is a broader alliance comprising the SLMC, CWC and several other parties. UNP sources say Mr. Wickremesinghe is likely to accede to this request. □

The 2005 Presidential Election

The election held to elect the 5th Executive President of Sri Lanka was by far one of the most peaceful polls held since the General Election of 1977. It was marked by a very high percentage of voter-turnout and by the close of polling between 78 and 82 per cent had cast their votes according to reports from the Elections Commissioner's office.

The highest voter turnout was in the Kurunegala District with 75 per cent of the eligible voters exercising their franchise. The lowest voter turnout was reported from the Jaffna District with 0.014 percent. Kalutara recorded a 63 percent turnout while 70 percent voted in Nuwara Eliya.

The Election Commissioner said though all arrangements had been made to stage the election in the North and East, including the provision of transport for voters in the LTTE held areas to commute to the cluster polling booths, the turnout had been low. The low turnout particularly in the North of the island has been attributed to the boycott call enforced by the LTTE.

The notable feature of the polling in the Western Province's two districts of Colombo and Gamapaha was the absence of party activists of the two main candidates. They were keeping a low profile in the vicinity of polling stations and were not seen intimidating voter or canvassing at the grassroots level at the last minute for their candidates. Reports from the provinces also indicated a peaceful election with a very few incidents of attempted impersonation reported.

According to the Election Commissioner and other foreign observers, polling had been free and fair in most parts of the country and there were no major incidents of violence or electoral malpractice, except in some parts of the Northeast where the LTTE had enforced a boycott.

Voting was very brisk at the suburban areas around Colombo and voters turned out in large numbers from the time polling centres were opened for voting at 7.00 a.m. The election witnessed a very high percentage of voters, both male and female, joining the queues at the polling stations from the opening time and there was brisk voting with of enthusiasm.

The main candidates in the Presidential election, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse and Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe also cast their votes early in the day. Premier Mahinda Rajapakse and his wife Shiranthi cast their votes at the Medamulana D.A. Rajapakse Maha Vidyalaya polling station, while UNP and Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe cast his vote at the College House, polling station in the University of Colombo. President Chandrika Kumaratunga cast her vote at the Sanghabodhi Maha Vidyalaya in Nittambuwa.

Rajapakse wins

Results released by the Election Commission indicated Premier Mahinda Rajapakse had received almost 50.3% of the vote, with his main rival, opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, taking 48.4% in a hard fought race that has

long been described as too close to call.

9,826,908 out of the 13,327,160 eligible voters had cast their ballots. Rajapakse polled 4,887,152 against Wickremesinghe's 4,706,366. The third candidate, Siritunga Jayasuriya, secured 35,425 votes (0.36%). 109,869 (1.12%) of the cast ballots were rejected.

Mahinda Rajapaksa won 11 districts: Gampaha, Monaragala, Kalutara, Galle, Hambantota, Matara, Kurunegala, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Kegalle, and Ratnapura.

Ranil Wickramasinghe won an equal number of districts: Colombo, Kandy, Matale, Nuwara Eliya, Batticaloa, Jaffna, Wanni, Digamadulla, Trincomalee, Puttalam, and Badulla.

There was a high turnout of voters in the country except for the northeast where the Tamil Tigers had called for a boycott. There was a near-total boycott in the Tamil dominated North, the call had a partial impact in the multi-ethnic east.

In northern Jaffna, about only 8,500 people voted (of which 5,500 opted for Wickremesinghe and almost 2,000 for Rajapakse). From the Kilinochchi district, only 1 person out of 66,596 voters - and he voted for Wickremesinghe.

Boycott and intimidation

A call for a boycott combined with threat and intimidation by the Tigers kept thousands of voters, from LTTE controlled areas, away from polling stations, according to independent elections observers.

Security forces monitoring movement, to and from Tiger territory, confirmed that only one person had entered government territory from Muhamalai to exercise his franchise. Five people had voted at Omathai but they had not come from within LTTE-controlled areas. According to statistics, 87,307 people from LTTE controlled areas are eligible to vote.

Meanwhile, polling in all areas of the north and east was very low. Only 1.5 per cent of the registered voters in Jaffna had cast their ballots. This included postal voters and displaced voters. Shops were closed in Jaffna and people stayed off the streets. The LTTE had earlier called for civilians to treat November 17 as a day of mourning.

44.13 per cent of registered voters had polled in Vavuniya, 23.73 per cent in Mannar and 1.35 per cent in Mullaitivu. "Those in the last category were mostly Sinhala voters because part of Welioya comes under Mullaitivu," one official said. Officials also said that between 50 to 60 per cent had voted in Batticaloa, adding that polling had been "very high" in Muslim areas.

In the Vanni district, only 581 people had polled at Uyilankulam, eighteen at Madhu, 1,023 at Nanattan and 1,393 at Palliarakandy (where Muslims are in majority). None of them were from LTTE controlled areas, although these stations had been set up to facilitate voting by residents of LTTE controlled areas.

In the east of the island, there were reports of many incidents of violence. There was a bomb explosion reported on the from the Batticaloa district. Six persons going to vote were injured, according to the Batticaloa police. The suspects responsible for the attack were not identified. In an incident not related to the election, reportedly a LTTE suicide bomber had died at Panidirippu, in the Kalmunai area, when a bomb had accidentally exploded. The explosion had also killed another LTTE cadre who was with the suicide bomber in a bakery room

near the Kalmunai-Amrapara highway. Police said the suicide bomber may have been waiting to kill a politician of the area. In yet another incident a Muslim cleric of the Kalmunai area was injured in a shooting incident but it was not known who was responsible for shooting.

A grenade was lobbed at a cluster polling station in Chenkaladdy, injuring five people. A total of 14,000 people had been registered to vote at this location but only 3,000 had cast their ballots. Another explosion took place in the playground of the Batticaloa Hindu College where an elections office had been set up. This did not affect the poll. However, European Union elections observers were withdrawn from Batticaloa after the two blasts.

John Cushnahan, head of the EU Observer Mission (EUOM), said two of their observer missions in Batticaloa had reported around lunchtime that they had been in the vicinity of two explosions. "In these circumstances, we implemented a pre-conceived security plan designed to ensure the safety of our team," he said. "Our instructions to them were that they should move to a location where they feel secure and await further instructions."

The EU had five teams in the eastern province. The other three continued to observe elections till polling closed.

Cushnahan also said that the mission had received "a number of reports about certain aspects of the campaign" in the north and east. By afternoon, emerging trends had shown that voting in LTTE controlled areas was "very low", he noted. "There have been reports of tyres being burned and groups of youths gathering on the LTTE side of the line of control," he commented. "Our observers are investigating these incidents."

"In government controlled areas of Jaffna, voting was much lower than usual," Cushnahan continued. "In government controlled areas of the east, polling seemed higher than Jaffna but lower than it has been in previous elections." He said that observers were investigating several allegations, including one report that a candidate has had grenades lobbed into a polling station and into a counting centre in Batticaloa.

Meanwhile, LTTE action to prevent voters from casting their ballots provoked criticism from independent observers and even from some diplomats. A Western diplomat is reported to have said: "The LTTE will argue that they wanted to show the Tamil people don't trust the Sri Lanka Government or that the election didn't matter. However, the international community will treat it as LTTE contempt for democratic process." "It was a mistake to do this," he added. "It will hurt their case in the eyes of the international community."

Kingsley Rodrigo, director of the People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL), agreed that voting had been low. At one school in Jaffna, for instance, only 26 people had cast their ballots. "Even people who wanted to come from uncleared areas into cleared areas to vote were prevented from doing so," he pointed out. "Although the Elections Commissioner provided buses for voters, the LTTE got directly involved in preventing people from coming," he said.

"I had pointed out a few days before the election that

unknown people were pasting posters asking people not to vote. They also issued statements and distributed leaflets asking people to treat November 17 as a day of morning. Un-

known parties cannot act without the blessings of the LTTE," Rodrigo said

Rodrigo noted that there had been several bomb blasts in Jaffna on the eve of the election, in addition to an attack on the Eelam People's Democratic Party office. Candidates had been prevented from campaigning in LTTE controlled areas. "These things should not happen in a democratic election. We are unable to hold free and fair elections in situations like this," he stressed.

"Almost total absence of participation in the polls and an atmosphere of violence and intimid-

ation in much of the North and East have significantly affected elections. It has compromised the democratic process and institutions," lamented PAFFREL in a statement released to the press.

The statement pointed out that prior to the elections, the LTTE made announcements that the Tamil people had no reason to be interested in these elections, but could exercise their vote if they so desired. Subsequently, the NGO said, "This

Presidential Election - 2005

Cumulative - All Island

Candidate	Votes	(%)
Mahinda Rajapaksha (UPFA)	4,880,950	50.3
Ranil Wickramasinghe (UNP)	4,694,623	48.4
Siritunga Jayasuriya (USP)	35,319	0.4
Achala Suraweera (JSP)	31,155	0.3
Victor Hettigoda (ELPP)	14,447	0.1
Chamil Jayaneththi (NLF)	9,286	0.0
Aruna De Zoysa (RJP)	7,671	0.0
Wimal Geeganage (SLNF)	6,633	0.0
Anura De Silva (ULF)	6,345	0.0
Ajith Kumara (DUA)	5,047	0.0
Wije Dias (SEP)	3,488	0.0
Nelson Perera (SLPF)	2,516	0.0
Shantha Dharmadewa (UNAF)	1,310	0.0

Cumulative - Districts

	Mahinda	Ranil
Anuradapura	231,040 (55.1%)	182,956 (43.6%)
Badulla	192,734 (45.2%)	226,582 (53.1%)
Batticaloa	28,836 (18.9%)	56,622 (79.5%)
Colombo	534,431 (48.0%)	569,627 (51.1%)
Digamadulla	122,329 (42.9%)	159,198 (55.8%)
Galle	347,233 (58.4%)	239,320 (40.3%)
Gampaha	596,698 (54.8%)	481,764 (44.2%)
Hambantota	202,918 (63.4%)	112,712 (35.3%)
Jaffna	988 (23.1%)	2,975 (69.7%)
Kalutara	341,693 (55.5%)	266,043 (43.2%)
Kandy	315,672 (44.3%)	387,150 (54.3%)
Kegalle	239,184 (51.0%)	223,483 (47.7%)
Kurunegala	468,507 (52.3%)	418,809 (46.7%)
Matale	120,533 (48.1%)	125,937 (50.2%)
Matara	279,411 (61.8%)	165,837 (36.7%)
Monaragala	126,094 (56.9%)	92,244 (41.6%)
NuwaraEliya	99,550 (28.0%)	250,428 (70.4%)
Polonnaruwa	110,499 (52.6%)	97,142 (46.2%)
Puttalam	160,686 (48.1%)	169,264 (50.7%)
Ratnapura	294,260 (53.0%)	252,838 (45.5%)
Trincomalee	55,669 (37.0%)	92,178 (61.3%)
Vanni	11,985 (17.2%)	56,622 (81.1%)
Total	4,880,950 (50.3%)	4,694,623 (48.4%)

was accompanied by calls by several pro-LTTE organizations who instructed the people not to take part in the elections."

The statement further said, "There were seven bomb attacks in polling stations, two suspected bombers died while assembling a bomb, tyres were burnt on the road and buses

were prevented from leaving LTTE-controlled areas."

The statement added, "Outside of the North and East the Presidential Election was the best conducted in the recent past, without major incidents of violence or electoral malpractices being reported."

Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, co-convenor of the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence, said that the poll had been low. He asserted that it was extremely unfortunate and tragic for the voters to be denied an opportunity to exercise their franchise. "The LTTE boycott was effective. They also prevented people from voting. There was evidence to suggest voters living in LTTE held areas were physically prevented from moving across the Omanthai and Muhamalai entry and exit points to reach cluster polling booths. was a general climate of threat and intimidation. It is extremely unfortunate," he said adding, "Political activists have a right to call for a boycott but nobody has the right to prevent other people from voting. The atmosphere was such that people did not vote."

Ranil feels cheated by boycott

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse has assumed office as the President of Sri Lanka thanks to the machinations of the Tamil Tigers.

The LTTE's decision to enforce a boycott of the presidential poll in the Tamil dominated northeast appears to have had a decisive impact on its eventual outcome. A certain victory for the Opposition Leader and United National Party (UNP) candidate, Ranil Wickremasinghe, was turned into a humiliating defeat. It is reliably learnt that most of the western governments and foreign-funded local NGOs who were wishing and expecting an easy victory for Wickremasinghe were shell-shocked by the outcome and seething with anger at the LTTE's action which prevented hundreds of thousands of Tamil voters from casting their ballot.

Claiming credit for entering into the Ceasefire Agreement with the LTTE, which had brought an end to the fighting over the last three years, Wickremasinghe, taking quite a conciliatory position on the ethnic conflict, in his campaign trail had promised to resume peace talks with the LTTE and to arrive at a political solution on federal lines as envisaged in the Oslo Declaration of December 2002 to which both the Government and the LTTE subscribed. Hence, it was anticipated that most Tamils would have voted for him. Under such circumstances, one would have ordinarily expected the Tigers not to act in

way that would prevent Tamil voters to cast in favour of Wickremasinghe. What the Tigers did was exactly the opposite. Had the LTTE not enforced the boycott, the Tamil voters from the northeast in their overwhelming majority would have certainly voted for him thereby wiping out the narrow majority with which Mahinda Rajapakse won and assuring Wickremasinghe a comfortable majority.

It is said that Ranil Wickremasinghe is very bitter because it was not his rival who deprived him of realizing his life-long dream of assuming the highest office in the country, but by the action of the LTTE which he regards as a grave betrayal.

Wickremasinghe and his well-wishers had calculated that the support of the CWC, the SLMC and the Upcountry People's Front which he had successfully secured earlier and the prospect of securing a substantial majority of the Tamil vote from the northeast would give him a winning edge over his main rival Rajapakse who certainly did not attract many votes from the minorities. But what was not taken into account in the equation was the unforeseen and unexpected decision of the LTTE to deprive the Tamils of their franchise on this occasion.

CWC heavyweight R. Yogarajan expressed the belief that the LTTE should not have interfered with the election process. The Tamil speaking people should not have been prevented from exercising their franchise, he said. The former MP acknowledged that the LTTE move stunned them.

The LTTE has yet to give a convincing reason as to why it took its decision to enforce a boycott of the presidential poll except saying that there was no point in backing either candidate as both have failed to live up to Tamil expectations.

Some say that the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran was likely to shed light on their boycott decision in his Heroes Day speech on November 27.

A western diplomat speaking on the condition of anonymity was quoted as saying that he was not at all surprised by the LTTE action. The LTTE, he asserted would take action to facilitate its goals and objectives irrespective of the consequences. The LTTE would not be concerned about the international community or any other party for that matter, he said, referring to the assassination of Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar.

"Savaged by Tigers"

In an editorial titled "Savaged by Tigers", the prestigious The Times of London says that "those who have accused the separatist Tamil Tigers of bad faith in peace negotiations can draw powerful evidence from Sri Lanka's presidential election."

Referring to the "brutally enforced boycott" of the elections in the predominantly Tamil North and East, The Times says thousands of votes likely to have been cast for Ranil Wickremasinghe were lost to him and therefore the election. "It is clear that the Tigers engineered Mr Wickremasinghe's defeat because his success in appealing to the majority of war weary Tamils over the heads of the terrorists was proving effective. Breakaway factions from Mr. Prabhakaran's group duly condemned the Tiger's tactics as well as their refusal to compromise in the Norwegian-brokered peace talks."

"The Tigers' hard core retaliated with assassinations and suppression of all dissent. But a return to power of Mr. Wickremasinghe, who has a shrewd grasp of negotiating tactics, would have put huge pressure on the Tigers to continue the conversation, contemplate a bargain and widen the split with the hardline leadership." □

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"Mahinda starting off on the wrong foot" - LTTE

The Tamil Tigers have rebuffed new Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapakse's call for peace talks, saying that he did not understand their aspirations for a separate homeland for the island's Tamils.

Reacting angrily to President Rajapakse's inaugural address, in a reference to his supporters, the LTTE said on their official Web site, "The pillars of the Tamil demand namely, Tamil homeland, Tamil nation, and Tamil self-determination will never be accepted by them."

In his address the new President had said, "During the presidential election, the overwhelming majority of people said that the country should not be divided. It is this aspiration that would be the basis of my policy for achieving peace."

"There is no space to talk of a federal solution. 'Sinhala people, Sinhala institutions and Sinhala political processes immersed in the Sinhala Buddhist hegemonic theories are not going to understand the just aspirations of the Tamil people,' the Web statement said.

"The very first speech given by Mahinda Rajapakse to his country, immediately after he was sworn in as its president, has given the impression to the Tamils that he is starting off on the wrong foot. His inaugural speech has revealed that he too is formed in the same mould - one that wants to exert full control over the minority people - as that of all the past southern leadership," the website said.

LTTE spokesman Daya Master has said the Tigers' plans for the future would be unveiled when the LTTE supreme, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, makes his annual policy speech on November 27.

Lesson from election

The LTTE's official website reproduced the following editorial of "Uthayan" of 19 November 2005:

"The presidential election results are out. Mahinda Rajapakse will become the fifth president of Sri Lanka. Sinhala south has elected him in preference to Ranil Wickremasinghe who was willing, be it half heartedly, to consider many issues including, sharing power with the Tamils, a federal political system, and the interim

self-governing authority by restarting the peace talks from where it has stalled.

South has elected as their head, Mahinda Rajapakse, who stood for elections with the support of the Sinhala Buddhist chauvinistic forces. Mahinda has made himself the president with the support of JVP that is immersed in a confusing mix of racism, religious chauvinism, and outdated communism. He has grabbed the presidential chair by standing on the shoulders of JVP that has a majoritarian inclination.

Tamils in Tamil homeland through their non-interference in this election, has given the opportunity to the southern people to elect their own head. This has provided a window to the international community to see the real face, the cruel face, of that Sinhala nation.

What are the lessons taught to us by this election results to elect the Sinhala executive president: • There is no traditional Tamil homeland in this island; • Tamils cannot claim to be a people with the right to be a nation; • Tamils do not have the right to self-determination; • The interim self governing authority put forward to take care of the urgent, essential humanitarian needs of the Tamils who have faced the devastation of a cruel war and the tsunami must not even be mentioned again; • There is no space to talk of federal solution. There can only be a solution within a unitary Sri Lanka.

Southern Sinhalese have accepted all of the above through their decision to elect Rajapakse who signed all of the above and put it forward as his campaign manifesto.

Ranil Wickremasinghe has only got the support of the minority people, Tamils, Muslims, and Upcountry Tamils, living outside the Tamil homeland. Southern Sinhalese have joined forces behind the Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism. What is the message it has given? Sinhala people, Sinhala institutions and Sinhala political processes immersed in the Sinhala Buddhist hegemonic theories are not going to understand the just aspirations of the Tamil people. The pillars of the Tamil demand, namely, Tamil homeland, Tamil nation, and Tamil self-determination will

never be accepted by them.

The election result has revealed the deepest feelings of the Sinhala people. It shows that the Sinhala people and by implication the leaders they elect do not have the understanding of the basic causes of the Tamil ethnic problem. The results also reveal that political maturity, magnanimity, fairness, and intelligent appraisal of the situation are lacking in them.

Through electing a head who refused to accept that a just and permanent solution to one of the people's of this island is an absolute necessity the Sinhala nation has exposed its innermost feelings. Majoritarian chauvinism has come shining through.

International community must correctly judge this mentality of the Sinhala nation that refuses to put forward a leader who can act with an understanding of what is just.

International community must, at least in the future, give up its stance of forcing the Tamils to do the impossible by coming to an agreement with this Sinhala nation by negotiating with them."

In the same mould

Again in an editorial, "Uthayan" of 21 November 2005, which was reproduced in the LTTE's website said, "Heeding to the announcement by the LTTE that the presidential election is of no relevance to the Tamils in the Tamil homeland and to let the Sinhala nation elect its own president, the Tamils ignored the election en masse. Through this rejection they demonstrated not only to Sri Lanka but also to the international community their position.

The very first speech given by Mahinda Rajapakse to his country, immediately after he was sworn in as its president, has given the impression to the Tamils that he is starting off on the wrong foot. His inaugural speech has revealed that he too is formed in the same mould - one that wants to exert full control over the minority people - as that of all the past southern leadership. Some aspects of his speech that has caused deep concern to the Tamils are worth noting:

- Mahinda Rajapakse who has, in the past, been extremely critical of Norway's facilitation role in the peace process, while touching on the subject of the peace efforts did not even mention Norway. This raises doubts and questions about Norway's role in the peace efforts.

- Ranil Wickremasinghe's government

(continued on next page)

'An honourable peace my noble objective' says new President

The following is the text of the speech made by President Mahinda Rajapakse after he was sworn in at the Presidential Secretariat on Saturday (19):.

First of all I would like to pay most respectfully my gratitude to hundreds of thousands of our people who voted me as the Executive President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

I also take this opportunity to commend and thank activists of all constituent parties of the United People's Freedom Alliance and other parties who untiringly worked for the victory of the UPFA at the Presidential election.

Our main objective of the election was to ensure the victory of a policy. Today the majority of the people has endorsed that policy by exercising universal suffrage, a necessary feature of the sovereignty of the people.

It is a policy that protects the country without dividing it. It is a policy that takes the country forward by eradicating poverty, under-development and backwardness.

It is a policy that builds a new Sri Lanka. I would like to declare that from now on it is not a mere election manifesto but the public policy of the State.

Throughout the election campaign we

stressed that we would be working to achieve an honourable peace in the country. During the Presidential election the overwhelming majority of the people said that the country should not be divided.

Today it is the common national aspiration of the people. It is this aspiration that would be the basis of my policy for achieving peace. I intend to begin a peace process based on this premise. War is not my method.

I reaffirm my commitment and determination to pursue the peace process to achieve an honourable peace that will respect the aspirations of all communities in our country.

As a long standing human rights activist at the grassroots level and the President of all communities of my country, the peace I envisage will ensure human rights of all and multi-party democracy in our country.

To achieve this noble goal my Government will be ready to engage the LTTE in discussing a political solution when the LTTE declares their readiness to resume negotiations, which they unilaterally abandoned.

To this end, I shall soon initiate consultations with all parties concerned as a matter of top priority with a view to building consensus. My priority work

in this area will include consultations with friendly countries who have worked with us in the past in regard to the peace process.

While these consultations are underway, I reaffirm my Government's continued commitment to the Ceasefire and my Government's readiness to review the operations of the Ceasefire, as soon as the LTTE is ready to do so, in order to effectively enforce its provisions especially those relating to political killings, abductions, child soldiers and other human rights.

I will initiate a new round of talks with all those who have a stake in the solution of the National Question. I would like to say that I would take steps to accommodate due representation of the interests of both the North and the South in the talks.

We would replace the hitherto held bilateral approach to peace with a multi-party approach. An year ago a great natural calamity struck us. I would like to say that I will be setting up a special institution under my supervision to rebuild all areas devastated by the tsunami including those in the North and East of the country.

From today onwards I will steer a macro-economic policy that ensures social justice while opening ample opportunities for the development of the individual with the objective of building a new economy that could take Sri Lanka to a strong position in the world economy. It is my intention to increase new investments in the economy to achieve rapid economic development.

We would provide maximum opportunities for foreign investment. Our aim is to ensure benefits of economic development to our citizens.

I will initiate a program of rapid economic development that will use all positive features of the free market system while giving pride of place to local entrepreneurs to develop agriculture, industry and services.

My policy is never to postpone for tomorrow what could be done today. The Buddhist teaching on punctuality is equally applicable to statecraft and public policy. Therefore we will have to take firm and responsible decisions in building a disciplined society.

In this respect my policy will be to consolidate the rule of law to the maximum. The law of the country should be just.

Everybody including the President of

(continued from page 13)

that started the peace process, agreed to it on the basis of a bipartisan talks between government and the LTTE. Rajapakse has now unilaterally declared that this peace effort will involve multiple parties.

- LTTE has repeatedly called for the full implementation of the ceasefire agreement. Rajapakse, while failing to comment on this, is announcing that he will renegotiate the ceasefire agreement. This position of Rajapakse reveals that he has no understanding of the memorandum of understanding signed between the government-LTTE and also shows that there is no chance of generating an understanding between government-LTTE.

- Forgetting everything that has hap-

pened, he has said that, "As soon as LTTE says it is ready for restarting the peace talks that they halted unilaterally, the peace talks can start."

Perhaps Rajapakse has indeed forgotten about how far the peace talks had progressed, the decision that were taken in them, and the reasons behind LTTE's withdrawal from it. He must have also forgotten that the peace talks progressed to holding direct talks about an interim self-governing authority.

How else can a leader caught in the Sinhala Buddhist hegemonic philosophy speak?

Yet, if he does not step outside this philosophy, there is no chance for a peaceful solution to the ethnic problem of this country." □

the country should obey and respect that just law. I would like to state here that I will not allow anyone to subvert law and order using political power and privileges. I believe all state institutions should strictly follow policies of good governance.

My Prime Minister, members of my Cabinet, the Armed Forces and the Police, the entire public service from the highest officer to the lowest rank should follow these good governance norms.

Public service should be a responsible and ethical service where there is no room for fraud, bribery and corruption. We must go back to the good administrative principle that the public servant is not a lord encouraging bureaucracy but a servant of the people.

There should be a mutually responsible and properly interlinked system of the state, the market and the civil society. Our slogan of a disciplined society includes the protection of culture and morals. With this objective in mind I stated in my election campaign that we must open a path where the noble teachings of all religions could be made use of.

I am a Buddhist. I was labelled as an anti-religious fanatic. A hate campaign

was unleashed portraying me as an anti-Christian. I have no enmity against these peoples. Only thing I say here is that we should get rid of this decadent political culture.

During my reign of office adherents of all religions could freely hold their religious beliefs and conduct their religious affairs freely in temples, churches, mosques and kovils. There will be no state interference in religion. The state has enough work.

I appeal to the clergy of all religions to inculcate the teachings of the founders of your religions in your devotees and thus develop our children and adults as good, virtuous, cultured citizens worthy of being members in a new democratic society.

We will build a country suitable for our children. I will not hesitate to do all I can to build a knowledgeable, skilled, strong and healthy citizenry. I am taking office for a short period - a period of six years.

Political power is not a privilege but only a temporary trust. I am not the master but the trustee of the country. I pledge to defend by all means the country you entrusted to me. I will act according to this pledge.

From now on Mahinda Rajapakse as President will not be a leader that belongs exclusively to any single party or group. I will not discriminate on party, colour, and racial or religious grounds. My political policy from now on will be the rule of law and protection of human rights.

I do not consider the UNP and its leader who contested with me at the Presidential elections as enemies. I appeal to all my voters not to harm by any means those that hold different opinions. Instead I appeal to the main Opposition party to unite with me in implementing our new program to build the country.

I appeal to the UNP to give maximum support to our efforts to achieve peace. I appeal to the media to be responsible and contribute to the welfare of the country by adhering to democracy and accepted ethics.

My journey to the Presidency was long and full of challenges. I know I have many more challenges before me in the future. I would like to state here that I would boldly accept all those challenges without hesitation for the welfare of my country and my beloved people.

We are Asians. Asia has made a great contribution to the world. I would work in close cooperation with our Asian friends, protecting Asian value systems to make our country strong. I will follow a progressive foreign policy that suits our country.

I am not a prince born with a golden spoon in the mouth. Like most of you I am a leader that grew from the ordinary people. Therefore I do not need new advisors to understand the problems of the people. I can understand them well.

I will provide advisors and experts with positions that suit their knowledge and expertise. I will not build any barriers that make me inaccessible to the people. My Presidential house and office are open to the people.

I am ready to steer my country learning from history what should be learnt. I understand that it is my duty to steer the country forward rectifying our mistakes in the past and defending our achievements. But I am no slave of history. I want to steer the country along a new path. I am a new leader.

I will lead a new Government, a new Cabinet of Ministers, a new policy, a new Sri Lanka, a new citizenry. I have decided to bring before Parliament new Budget proposals based on the Mahinda Chintanaya we presented to the people.

I believe it is necessary to begin my term of office with the people's confidence in me intact. I assure all Sri Lankans that I will take forward my rule protecting parliamentary democracy at its best.

I believe my friends are those who offer just criticism and not those who sing hosannas in my praise. I will prepare the environment for it.

Finally, I would like to appeal to my dear compatriots thus: Mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters, children work for the welfare of the country. Perform your duty. Be resolute and industrious in your work. Let us develop our country through our work. As the country prospers you will also prosper. I wish you all success.

May the Triple Gem bless you. May all Gods protect you. □

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"Karuna Defection, Wickremasinghe's Ploy"

7 November, TamilNet, - A United National Party (UNP) stalwart in Nuwara Eliya district, Mr. Naveen Dissanayake, has said that it would not be necessary for Sri Lanka's Military to fight the Tigers. "American and Indian forces will fight the LTTE if Liberation Tigers' leader Pirapaharan opts to wage a war," Naveen Dissanayake told the audience at an election propaganda meeting, Thursday (3 November), at Ginigathena in the upcountry district of Nuwara Eliya, a Tamil daily, Uthayan, quoted in its headline story, Monday (7 November). Mr. Dissanayake has also claimed that a situation was created to make the renegade LTTE commander Karuna to get dissatisfied with his leadership during the period covering his trips to Europe, the paper said.

According to the paper report, Dissanayake, the former Deputy Minister of Plantation Industries, has claimed that Karuna had the full backing of Wickremasinghe before he set out on his diversion. "This is why Mr. Pirapaharan was unable to wage another war," the UNP stalwart told the audience.

Dissanayake also referred to Mr. Wickremasinghe's meetings with the US President, George W. Bush, and Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, the President of the Indian National Congress (Congress Party), and said that Wickremasinghe has made the necessary groundwork to conduct the war with the LTTE, if the latter opts for one. "There will be no need for Sri Lankan forces to do the fighting," he further said.

The meeting was organised by the Nuwara Eliya district organiser of the UNP, Mr. K. K. Piyadasa. Mrs. Hema Premadasa, the wife of the late Sri Lankan president and former UNP leader Mr. R. Premadasa, UNP parliamentarian Bandula Gunawardene, and Mr. Vijeyakumar, the General Secretary of the Upcountry People's Front were present at the meeting, the paper said. The UNP parliamentarian Naveen Dissanayake is the son of late Gamini Dissanayake.

UNP: 'We trapped and split LTTE, sank their ships'

TamilNet, November 8 - Sri Lanka's opposition United National Party this week claimed credit for engineering a split within the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) through the peace process whilst at the same time keeping the movement locked in via an international security net. The UNP also claimed credit for the sinking of LTTE vessels during the peace talks.

UNP stalwart Milinda Moragoda, a close confidante of the party's Presidential candidate, Ranil Wickremesinghe, was one of the negotiators who represented his government in six rounds of talks with the LTTE between September 2002 and March 2003.

In an interview with the Daily Mirror published Tuesday (7), Mr. Moragoda said the UNP would review the ceasefire it had signed with the LTTE and crackdown to end a spate of killings the Army blames on the Tigers, but international monitors say is part of a cycle of mutual attacks in an ongoing 'subversive war.'

"There is a difference between the rule of a democratically elected government and that of a rebel group," Mr. Moragoda said of the LTTE. "The government has to ensure that the writ of the government is run in the government controlled areas."

He rejected accusations by Sinhala ultra-nationalists, including Mr. Wickremesinghe's main opponent, that the UNP government had weakened Sri Lanka's national security when it signed a ceasefire with the LTTE in February 2002.

"It should be remembered how active our naval forces were when we were in power," Mr. Moragoda said, referring to the sinking of two LTTE merchant vessels in international waters in March and June 2003.

"There was so much of activity and with the help of the international intelligence network that we had set up, our navy managed to intercept several LTTE arm ships."

"But we hardly heard about such interceptions after the UPFA came into power," Mr. Moragoda said of the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA), which toppled the UNP-led one in April 2004.

He also denied reports the UNP was planning to downsize the Army: "We in fact feel that we need more soldiers and that is why we launched several recruitment drives when in office."

"Our efforts to further strengthen the military based on the advice of international military experts, especially from the US and India, had been misinterpreted and given some twists," he said referring to reports quoting UNP officials as saying its government had envisaged Indian and US troops fighting the LTTE.

But at the same time Mr. Moragoda said the UNP had enmeshed the LTTE's armed struggle in "an international safety net" and thereby prevented a return to war.

Asked why he thought the ceasefire had survived this long, he replied: "Purely because of the international safety net that we managed to muster. If not for that by now we would have reverted back to war."

"Mr. Wickremesinghe at the very outset saw through the challenges and made it a point to garner the support of the leading international players as guarantors of the peace process," he said.

Mr. Moragoda defended the February 2002 ceasefire agreement, saying "everybody is finding fault with the clauses in the ceasefire agreement still nobody wants to do away with that ... end of this ceasefire means war."

"However there is no doubt about the fact that we have to review the agreement to suit the new challenges of the process. This is a fact accepted by all parties including the LTTE," he said.

The LTTE has however refused to contemplate reviewing or altering the agreement and instead have sought discussions on the lack of implementation by the UNP and UPFA governments of several key clauses.

Further rejecting accusations by the UNP's critics that the party had strengthened the LTTE through the peace process Mr. Moragoda instead said the party had fostered fissures within the LTTE, referring in particular to the rebellion against the organisation's leadership by its former eastern commander, Karuna.

"Mr. Wickremesinghe always says that we have to create the right environment so that the LTTE would not be able to behave the way it does," he said.

"A dissident Karuna would most probably have never

emerged in a war situation. By silencing guns, by opening roads and removing barricades we created an environment that offered alternatives to the most ruthless of the LTTE cadres," Mr Moragoda said.

"Even a suicide cadre who had seen all these positive changes would think twice because he has been offered an alternative to their resolve to die for a cause. When they see that they can live the life of any other citizen and have the same access and opportunities they will definitely think twice."

In March 2004 Karuna, then the LTTE's commander for the Batticaloa-Amparai sector, rebelled against the LTTE leadership, but when his six week rebellion collapsed following a Tiger offensive over the Easter Weekend, Karuna defected to the Sri Lanka Army with a handful of close confidantes.

The LTTE accuse Sri Lankan military intelligence of supporting the Karuna Group and other paramilitary groups in a violent campaign against its members and supporters.

Mr. Moragoda acknowledged the charge, but refused to say if Mr. Wickremesinghe would disarm the paramilitary groups as stipulated in the ceasefire agreement.

"We see it more as a law or order issue [than a ceasefire matter] especially in the Eastern province than anything else," he said.

"Karuna is a product of the peace process for which the UNP had made the bulk of the contributions. ... As to what we should do with Karuna is something that we have to decide once our candidate is elected the president."

Worshippers killed in attack on Mosque

Nov 18 - Unidentified assailants lobbed two grenades into the Akkaraipattu Jummah Mosque killing six Muslim worshippers Friday (18) early morning at 5:45 a.m. At least eighteen worshippers were wounded. Two victims died on the spot and the other four succumbed to their wounds at Akkaraipattu and Amparai Hospitals. Tension prevails in Akkaraipattu, 64 km south of Batticaloa town. The assailants hurled grenades on the floor of the mosque crowded with devotees attending Jummah prayers Friday morning. Mr. Ibraheem, 36, Mr. Abubaker, 60, were the victims who died on the spot. Mr. M.I.M Mustafa and Mr. Noordeen were two of the victims who succumbed to their wounds. Wounded persons were rushed Akkaraipattu Hospital. Two victims succumbed to their wounds at Akkaraipattu Hospital and the other two died at Amparai Hospital, sources added.

Tamil civilians living in the border area were seen leaving their houses fearing a communal backlash following the incident. The Mosque is located on Akkaraipattu-Amparai Road. Some Muslim community leaders and the security forces blamed the LTTE for the Mosque massacre though the LTTE has denied any involvement.

President Mahinda Rajapakse severely condemned the killing of four persons and causing injuries to 40 people by terrorists during prayer time at a mosque in Akkaraipattu. He stated that he would be taking all possible steps to prevent such incidents in future. The President's message states: "It is with deep regret and sorrow that I learnt the death of four persons at

a mosque in Akkaraipattu, following a terrorist attack in the early hours of Friday, November 18. I strongly condemn this despicable act and express my deepest sympathies to the families of the victims. Along with Minister A.L.M. Athaula, I will be taking steps to prevent a recurrence of incidents of this nature. Under the circumstances I appeal to the public to act with calm and restraint."

Nov 21 - Normal life in Kalmunai, Sammanthurai and Akkaraipattu came to a standstill on 21 November when a day of mourning was declared in protest against the LTTE killing of five Muslim worshippers in a grenade attack on Friday, 19 at the Grand Mosque in Akkaraipattu. Government institutions, banks, commercial establishments and shops were closed and day to day activities were affected, as hundreds of thousands of Muslims staged a Hartal. Eastern province DIG Rohan Abeyratne said that all shops and offices in the area were closed and public transport was at a standstill. He said it was a peaceful demonstration and no incidents were reported so far.

Violence and tension mark election in Northeast

Nov 16 - Tension prevailed in Jaffna, and streets were deserted at 7.00 p.m. as several grenade explosions marked the election eve. Unidentified assailants lobbed grenades at the offices of the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP) offices in Chavakacheri, Manipay, Achchuveli, Point Pedro and Mallakam. EPDP has campaigned in favour of presidential candidate Mahinda Rajapakse.

A Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldier sustained serious injuries and several EPDP cadres received minor injuries in Wednesday's (16) explosions.

An SLA soldier was wounded in Kachchai when two motorbike-riding assailants lobbed a grenade at the sentry post around 1:00 p.m, police said. The wounded soldier was rushed to Palaly military hospital.

Unidentified men lobbed grenades at the EPDP office located in Manipay Maruthadi junction around 4:30 p.m, A grenade was lobbed at the Achchuveli office of the EPDP located on Avarangal Achuveli Road around 8:00 p.m. Mallakam office of the EPDP was attacked at 8:15 p.m. Minor injuries were reported by medical sources in Jaffna. Three more grenade attacks were reported after 9:00 p.m Wednesday.

A policeman was wounded in Nellyyadi at 9:30 p.m. in a grenade attack. The Manthikai, Point-Pedro, office of the EPDP was attacked at 9:30 p.m. An SLA military post was also targeted by unknown assailants Wednesday night.

Four grenades were lobbed at the sentry post situated in Chavakacheri Hindu Ladies College which is to serve as a clustered polling station during Thursday elections. The assailants also fired at the sentry post. SLA soldiers retaliated with gunfire, sources said.

EPDP office in Chavakacheri was also attacked. An EPDP vehicle was also targeted by the attackers in Nunavil on Jaffna Kandy Road in Thenmaradchi, Chavakacheri Police said.

Earlier in the day, Sri Lankan troops were busy removing posters calling for boycotting the polls. A poster said the vot-

ers who ignore the elections also exercise the "democratic virtue" by expressing the unsuitability of both candidates.

Hundreds of university students carried effigies of presidential candidates Mahinda Rajapakse and Ranil Wickramasinghe from Jaffna Medical faculty to Thirunelveli Junction where they burnt the effigies. (Source: *TamilNet*)

17 Nov 2005 - Meanwhile, two Tamil civilians, S. Sathiyar, 16, and K. Niroshan, 28, were killed and five children seriously injured in an explosion inside a house located on Somanathar Road at Pandirippu in Kalmunai around 1.30 p.m. on Thursday (17), Police said. The children, Piriya 8, Vithushya 9, Rangan 9, Chandran 18, including two-year old Mathushan, were rushed to Kalmunai Hospital, Police said.

Two assailants, on a motorbike, shot and wounded Moulavi A.M.Nafar, in Kalmunai. The Moulavi was returning from Mosque at 12:15 p.m.

Seven civilians and two Police constables were wounded in a grenade attack at 12:15 p.m. at the polling booth located in Chenkalady Maha Vidyalyam, 2 km north of Eravur. The wounded were rushed to Eravur Hospital.

Two home guards, two police constables and an election officer on duty at the main counting centre at the Batticaloa Hindu College were wounded in a grenade attack Thursday noon. The centre was provided high security by the Sri Lankan troops. The policemen were seriously wounded, medical sources said.

In Akkaraipattu, 21 km southeast of Amparai town, Sri Lankan Special Task Force soldiers were confronted by unidentified gunmen, who fired at them around 7:30 a.m. The incident took place between Thandiyadi and Thamaraiikulam at the 215 Mile Post. STF soldiers returned fire, but no casualties were reported. (Source: *TamilNet*)

North and East election violence condemned

The Sri Lanka Democracy Forum (SLDF), an organisation of expatriate Sri Lankan human rights activists, has in a statement condemned "the election violence, intimidation and the consequent disenfranchisement of Tamil citizens by the LTTE in the North and East."

The statement further said, "The elections in the North and East were held in a climate of fear as the LTTE, through its front organizations, called for a boycott of the elections. This directive was backed by violence on the days leading up to and on Election Day, as LTTE cadres on motorcycles beat and chased away voters and tyres were burned as road blocks to intimidate civilians. LTTE cadres appointed by the New Left Front as polling agents (normally used in elections to challenge fraud and can only be appointed by a party with a candidate in the elections), were used by the LTTE to intimidate voters inside polling booths and to identify voters who could then be targeted for retribution.

"On the day before the election, there were at least five grenade attacks on the offices of the EPDP in Jaffna, a political party supportive of presidential candidate Mahinda Rajapakse. Two days before the election, cadres from the LTTE's cultural wing brought a youth, twenty-two year old Dinesh, to the

grounds of Kokkuvil Hindu College and tied, tortured and beat him to death in public view. Grenade attacks and killings were also reported in the East on Election Day. The Jaffna Government Agent and the chief election officer for the Jaffna District stated that only 1.5% of the eligible voters cast their votes.

"The 2005 presidential election in the North is very similar to the 2004 parliamentary elections when, once again, Tamils living in the North were denied their democratic rights. In this regard, the low voter turn out in this election is no different from the 90+% of the votes, which the LTTE manufactured in the 2004 elections for its proxy the TNA through violence, intimidation and massive fraud. Indeed, as John Cushnahan of the EU Election Monitoring Mission noted after the elections in 2004, the elections in the North and East were the 'anti-thesis of democracy' and the 'primary source of the violence was the LTTE who were determined to ensure that the TNA would emerge as the sole representative of the Tamil people.'

"After three and a half years of a much-violated Ceasefire Agreement, democratic space in the North and East has been greatly diminished, not only in terms of electoral politics, but also in terms of the rights to life, freedom of expression and freedom of association. Indeed, the very basic civil and political rights necessary for democratic space and engagement have progressively been curtailed during a time of peace. During yesterday's elections, yet another opportunity for the people of the North and East to voice their concerns on fundamental political and economic issues, as well as the peace process, was taken away from them. And, underlying and justifying this constant silencing of Tamil and Muslim voices is the LTTE's claim to "sole-representation".

"SLDF calls on all political parties and civil society actors in Sri Lanka, foreign governments, multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union, and the Donors involved in the peace process in Sri Lanka, to publicly denounce the intimidation and violence that kept Tamils from exercising their democratic rights during yesterday's presidential elections. Fundamental to this will be a refutation of the LTTE's claim of sole-representation, which has been antithetical to democracy in both name and practice. Finally, given the LTTE's attacks on democracy and the rights of Muslims and Tamils, any resumption of peace talks should be inclusive with participation of independent delegations from the Muslim community and other Tamil parties."

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The new President faces formidable challenges

Jehan Perera

Newly elected President Mahinda Rajapakse took his oaths of office after a closely fought electoral battle that saw the country polarise electorally along ethnic, religious and regional lines. All parts of the country with significant concentrations of ethnic and religious minorities were won by Opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe. The margin of victory was 180,000 votes. Ironically, it was the disenfranchisement of over 700,000 Tamil voters that swung the election in favour of President Rajapakse who had campaigned on a Sinhalese nationalist platform. The President's voter base was unaffected by the enforced boycott imposed by the LTTE and orchestrated by pro-LTTE social organisations in the north east.

In a cruel twist, Opposition leader Wickremesinghe who had carefully nurtured the support of the ethnic and religious minorities found himself cheated out of victory by the enforced boycott. The main feature of this election was the non-participation of virtually the entirety of the Tamil electorate in the north east of the country. A high level of intimidation and the strategic use of violence ensured that the voter turnout in the populous Jaffna peninsula and the LTTE controlled parts of the north east was nearly zero.

The election report of the international observers of PAFFREL stated that "no LTTE groups called for a 'Day of Mourning' to replace Election Day, and sadly, that is what they got: the sinister façade of peace of a closed society rather than the exuberance of the democratic process at work." The report also stated that "The widespread election day violence in the east demonstrated the false claim of the LTTE that there was no boycott of the polls. In LTTE-controlled areas buses and ferries sent to collect voters were detained until after the voting and burning tyres and other obstacles blocked the roadways."

If the Tamil voters had been permitted to vote in the north east most of them surely would have cast their votes for Mr Wickremesinghe. The voting pattern of the few who did vote indicates that

this would have been the case. If elected President, Mr Wickremesinghe would have been a truly national president of the Sri Lankan polity, representing all ethnic communities. It is therefore doubly ironic that the LTTE should post statements on their websites that the international community should not support the "Sinhala Government" that they themselves helped to bring to power.

Most of the Tamil people I spoke to in Jaffna in the north and Trincomalee in the east prior to the election told me they would vote for Mr Wickremesinghe as they felt he would keep the country away from war. What they valued most was the preservation of peace. The LTTE's planned celebrations of their Heroes Day at the site of the former Elephant Pass army base may be to send a message that their patience is running out with the type of peace that is on offer.

Tasks ahead

It is clear that President Rajapakse is well aware of the divided and polarised polity over which he has been entrusted leadership. In his inaugural address the President said that he would henceforth act without bias as the President of all Sri Lankans. He reassured the religious minorities that religion and the state would be separate. He promised to restore peace through negotiations with all parties, including the LTTE. There was no gloating in the President's speech, and there was an outline of the priority areas he wished to tackle and the spirit of consensus he hoped to achieve.

But the difficulties that lie in the new President's path should not be discounted or under estimated. President Rajapakse has around him a diverse and contradictory coalition of 27 parties in which the Sinhalese nationalist element has been dominant. They would each see an opportunity to achieve their own goals, which are at variance with the vision of a multi ethnic and multi religious society. The great majority of the ethnic and religious minorities chose not to vote for President Rajapakse, but voted for his opponent Ranil Wickremesinghe instead. All of these people are anxious about

their futures.

In addition, President Rajapakse has inherited two important realities that can limit his ability to implement the programme of action he may have in mind. The first is the need for a stable majority in Parliament that is not hostage to the threat of withdrawal. This would necessitate rebuilding coalitions with the minority parties. But there are indications that his nationalist Sinhalese allies may wish to scuttle that option. Instead of being conciliatory to the parties representing minority ethnic and religious communities who supported the defeated opposition candidate, these Sinhalese nationalist parties are publicly gloating that it is possible to win elections without their support.

The other important reality that the new President has to contend with is the LTTE's hold over the north east. So far the LTTE's military control has been limited to the LTTE-controlled areas that are demarcated by the Ceasefire Agreement. This agreement ended the horror of war for the people. But the protracted situation of no-war, no-peace has permitted the LTTE to enter into government-controlled areas of the north east and achieve de facto control. This was clearly evident in the effectiveness of the LTTE's boycott call of the Presidential elections. It is only the resumption of the peace process under greater international supervision that can make the LTTE subject to the accountability of responsible governance.

Difficult problems

The ascent of President Rajapakse to the highest and most powerful position in the country brings with it a measure of doubt and of hope. There is a measure of hope because of the kind of person he is, and what he has been saying recently. President Rajapakse has been liberal in his political life. It is wrong to describe him as a Sinhalese hardliner. In one of his campaign speeches he outlined his four priorities for the country. At the top of the list came peace. This was followed by economic revival, restoration of law and order and the creation of a society in which children could grow healthily.

On the other hand, there is doubt because there is uncertainty about the new President's actual strategy to solve the problems facing the country. During the 37 years of his political career President

(continued on page 24)

Presidential Elections: A wake-up call to all

Sathya

The outcome of the Presidential Election with all the excitement and disappointments of a one-day match is in the opinion of Sathya a wake up call to all, including Sathya whose hibernation was once again rudely disturbed.

Firstly, it was a wake up to the Tamil People. It was indeed a cruel irony that their self-proclaimed "sole representative" was bent on defeating Ranil Wickremesinghe, the Presidential candidate that the vast majority of the Tamil people wanted to see emerge as the victor! Of course, it was not the love for Ranil, but the fear of the Sinhala hardliners arrayed behind Mahinda Rajapakse that propelled the Tamil voters in Ranil's direction.

Ultimately, the Tamil people living in areas under the direct military-intelligence and propaganda control of the LTTE were disenfranchised by the LTTE. It was not a boycott by the Tamil people. It was instead a boycott call by the LTTE backed by coercion, intimidation and force. So how come that the Tamil people behaved in a manner that was diametrically opposed to that of their "sole representative", as evidenced by their preference when they came out in their numbers and voted for Ranil in areas where the Tigers could not directly and physically enforce their control? Well, that is the question that the LTTE will have to ponder over.

Meanwhile, the decision of the LTTE to disenfranchise the Tamil voter at this Presidential Election (in contrast to the creation of phantom voters at the last General Elections!) could well be the third historical blunder of the LTTE - the other two historical blunders being the expulsion of the Muslim people from the "traditional Tamil homeland" compelling the Muslim people to distance themselves from the Tamil national struggle and the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi which compelled India to list the LTTE supremo and his intelligence chief as the most wanted criminals in India.

If the LTTE reckoned that the International Community would empathise with it if Mahinda Rajapakse is elected with the support of Sinhala hardliners, they are in for another rude shock which is bound to follow the earlier shock treat-

ment meted out by the European Union by imposing a travel ban on LTTE delegations.

If Anton Balasingham, Thamilselvan or LTTE's international lobbyists were to complain to the West about the "hardliners" in Colombo, they are bound to be admonished for not allowing the people that they claim to "solely" represent to vote and ensure a victory for Ranil Wickremesinghe, their favoured candidate.

The writing is already on the wall with the comment by John Cushman, EUs Head of the Election Monitoring Mission at the media briefing following the elections that he would take up LTTE "discriminatory" and "unacceptable" behaviour with the Council of the European Union.

The second wake up call is to Ranil Wickremesinghe. His policy of appeasement of the LTTE is not winning him any votes amongst broad sections of the Sinhala people as well as the Muslim people - not to mention the remnants as well as the fledgling Tamil democratic alternatives to the LTTE. Further, the emphasis on negative peace (i.e. the mere absence of war) with a so-called international security net to bail him out if things go wrong and the notion of an agreement only with the LTTE, with the SLFP being made a fait accompli is not exactly firing the imagination of the people in the South.

Ranil would also have realised that this is not the first time that the Tiger bit the hand that fed it. It is imperative that Ranil should now put into practice his campaign preachings about removing the peace process from partisan politics and to extend support to Mahinda Rajapakse's fresh approach to the peace process based on inclusivity and human rights that goes beyond a mere "deal" between the Government of the day and the LTTE.

The third wake up call is to Mahinda Rajapakse. He must put into practice and in deed his stirring words following the taking of oaths that he no longer represents his voters and allies, but all sections of the Sri Lanka society. He can neither pursue the peace process, manage a mixed economy aimed at equitable

growth or for that matter govern the country if he allows himself to be held hostage to the forces of ethnic and religious extremism and obscurantism in the south.

He has to put into practice and deed his words following the taking of oaths ceremony that he stands for an honourable peace for all the Peoples of Sri Lanka. While inclusivity in the 'peace process was sorely lacking in the manner in which it was being managed by Norway, LTTE and the Government of the day since the signing of the ceasefire agreement, Mahinda Rajapakse should recognize that once the process of consultations aimed at a broad consensus is advanced, there will come a time when the principle of "sufficient" consensus may have to be put into place based on the principles of democracy, secularism, pluralism. It is a consensus based on these principles that would ensure sustainability and equality.

The fourth wake up call is to the JVP. The JVP must realize that democracy, devolution and development are inseparably linked and that one cannot be advanced without the other. In fact power-sharing and resource-sharing could well be the key link between democracy and development and is imperative particularly in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural country like Sri Lanka. Diversity and differentiation rather than uniformity and homogeneity is the essence of Marxist ideology and philosophy. It is incumbent on the JVP, if it is truly a vanguard of the working people and the oppressed masses as it perceives itself to be, to take forward the cry of devolution rather than dismiss it as being archaic and obsolete.

In this regard, statements by the JVP during the election campaign that if the LTTE were to give up its demand for a separate state then the South would be prepared to go beyond a unitary State is welcome and could well be the basis for future negotiations. The responsibility now lies with the JVP as the vanguard of the working people to go before the people with that message rather than wait for a referendum and then call on the people to vote against devolution.

The role of a vanguard Marxist party (as the JVP perceives itself to be) is to raise the level of mass consciousness, rather than to get bogged down in false consciousness.

The fifth wake up call is to the religious organizations which are bent on playing politics. Every religion has its essentials and non-essentials. While the essentials of all religions are the same, it

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Challenges Facing President Rajapakse

V.S. Sambandan

Mahinda Rajapakse, in his self-defined role of architect of a "new Sri Lanka," has to balance several contradictions. These arise from the polarised mandate and his political allies.

A polarised Sri Lankan electorate has spoken. On November 18, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse won the Presidency with a mandate that simultaneously reiterates and challenges a number of stereotypes. Even the Tamil "boycott" in the North-East, is a critical non-mandate of sorts that the new President has to factor in as he commences charting the roadmap for what he describes as a "new Sri Lanka."

First things first: the starting point for the winner is to interpret his mandate. This verdict, almost a political photo-finish, is somewhat tricky to interpret. It represents the best possible under the circumstances. The multi-ethnic electorate has neither resoundingly endorsed the call for entrenching a majoritarian state nor has it given a resigned nod for peace at any cost.

Rajapakse's victory with the narrow-

(continued from page 20)

is the non-essentials like rites, rituals, and the institutionalization of religion with their personality cults that divide Peoples along religious lines.

State patronage to one religion in a multi-religious society leads to the alienation of other religions, just as much as the proselytizing based on global financial networks is the worst form of intolerance and threat to religious freedom and harmony between religions. The despicable manner in which religious organizations and personalities dabbled in politics during the election campaign is a wake up call to the people who espouse those religions to be vigilant against self-proclaimed messengers and servants of God.

The final wake up call is of course to Sathya to stop throwing brickbats at others and to start looking inwards into the chasm that governs word and deed of Colombo-based "civil" society to which he belongs! More on this at an "appropriate" time! □

est margin in the history of elections for an Executive President makes it clear there is no overwhelming support for majoritarianism of the variety advocated by the President's allies, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU).

The message from the North-Eastern Tamil "boycott," evidently on the diktat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), is clear. From the Tigers' point of view, the conflict is one best fought along clearly demarcated lines of majority and minority nationalisms.

The third element of the mandate is the overwhelming endorsement for Opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe in electoral divisions where the minorities - Sri Lankan Tamils, Muslims, and Plantation Tamils - were in large numbers.

Equally important is that the majority Sinhala community remains near-equally divided between the unitarist Rajapakse and the federalist Wickremesinghe. This is a critical marker for the new President.

A political leader with vast experience in the dynamics of mass-mobilisation, Rajapakse is now in a setting appropriate for his transformation into a statesman.

Central to his successful tenure at the helm of the Sri Lankan state will be how effectively and painlessly he balances the strong calls by his allies for entrenching a majoritarian state with the equally vocal demand for power-sharing by the minorities.

At a glance, the mandate can be interpreted as a politically-convenient consent for a strong Sinhala-nationalist line, which includes an anti-West, particularly anti-Norway, rhetoric. A statesman's perspective would factor in the 48.43 per cent opinion that runs entirely to the contrary.

The direction the Sri Lankan State moves in will depend almost entirely on how true the new President stays to his commitment given to the nation at his inaugural. "From now on Mahinda Rajapakse as President will not be a leader that belongs exclusively to any sin-

gle party or group. I will not discriminate on party, colour and racial or religious grounds."

Central to Rajapakse's success in his self-defined role of architect of a "new Sri Lanka" is how he balances the several contradictions that arise from the polarised mandate and his political allies.

Needless to say, his poll-pact with the JVP and the JHU vastly enabled him to dent pocketboroughs of Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP).

The dynamics of ethnic reconciliation and the President's commitment at his inaugural, however, necessitate a seamless recalibration that balances his vision for Sri Lanka and the agenda of his political allies. Among the several ways out could be a well-timed Parliamentary poll.

This, though, could be an expensive exercise for a poll-weary nation and, more importantly, a political risk for the ruling party given the small lead secured in the Presidential election. The opening move for Rajapakse would be to ensure the early commencement of the proposed inclusive talks with "all those who have a stake in the solution of the national question."

On several counts, Rajapakse has the necessary ingredients for his "new Sri Lanka" already set out by the political leadership of the past 11 years - his predecessor Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and Wickremesinghe. For, despite political differences, Kumaratunga and Wickremesinghe had made the Sinhala majority aware of the need for political power-sharing.

The objections are largely from the extremes of Sinhala polity based on the fear that federalism equals secession. The polarised electorate, with the unitarists narrowly nudging out the federalists, is another factor Rajapakse would consider during his proposed consensus talks.

More so given the need to present an acceptable Southern position that will enable him to re-start talks with the Tigers. Another challenge for Rajapakse is to redefine the existing conflict-resolution parameters - the role of the facilitator, Norway, the ceasefire agreement and its monitoring mechanism.

The new President's "appeal to India and other friendly Asian neighbours as well as the international community," to help Sri Lanka reach "an honourable peace," could be a sign of things to come.

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TRIBUTE TO JEYAM THAMOTHERAM

(1918 - 2005)

Ivan Pedropillai,
President, Tamil Writers Guild, UK

A leading light of the Tamil Community has been extinguished but his memory will live on in our hearts forever.

The mortal remains of Jeyam Thamotheram were laid to rest in London, England on 4th November 2005. He passed away on 27th October at 87 years of age after a lifetime of service to the Tamil community. He was a loving husband, a father, a grandfather, a brother, an uncle, a friend, a counsellor and above all the conscience and the motivating force that unceasingly mustered and rallied the intellectual and professional classes of expatriate Tamils to uphold and advance the cause of the oppressed Tamils of Sri Lanka in their struggle for freedom. The institutions he created and the network of friends that he made by his immense capacity of persuasiveness and his infectious energy will remain as edifices to his selfless devotion to the cause of justice and self-determination for Tamils in the northeast of Sri Lanka.

But before we paint a picture of a man who fought for justice and liberation for his own people, we must thank God for creating in him a man endowed with great moral and intellectual courage and an unwavering love of his homeland. The hallmarks of his character were formed in childhood in a family in which his father, Mr C. P. Thamotheram, was the eminent Principal of Hartley College, Point Pedro; a leading Christian College in the country which has established a reputation for producing brilliant scholars especially in mathematics.

Jeyam Thamotheram went on to study in other leading Christian Colleges, such as St John's College, Jaffna and St Joseph's College, Colombo. He was an outstanding student and entered the University College, Colombo on an illustrious exhibition award. He obtained a First class honours degree in mathematics from University College and went back to teach in his old school, Hartley College, from 1939 to 1942. Although he left teaching for a short period of two years to join the Ceylon Government Supplies Department, his love of teaching saw him



return as a teacher to St Patrick's College, Jaffna for a couple of years and from there he left to join Wesley College, Colombo where he taught for over 10 years.

In 1944 he married Florence Thiviamalar Nalliah. She too comes from a leading Christian family, in which her father - Rev N. K. Nalliah was a prominent pastor in Jaffna. They were to have six children, three boys and three girls who have themselves gone on to become well-qualified and upright persons of whom Jeyam and Florence can be rightly proud. Jeyam was a loving husband and a caring father, and in turn the devotion of the children to their parents is a joy to behold. It has been a very moving experience for me to see how they have looked after him in his illness and have worked together with their own children to organise the final valediction for him.

While teaching at Wesley College he won a Fulbright scholarship for one year to the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, after which he again returned to Wesley College to teach. His interest in serving the rights of teachers as a profession was to come to the fore at about this time. In 1954-55 he took on the mantle of President of the Colombo Teachers Association and led them ably to become a force for good in the teaching profession. He was also starting to prove his

keenness in expanding the interests of teachers by founding the Ceylon Teachers Travel Club.

From Wesley College, he joined the British Council in Colombo as the First Administrative Assistant in 1959 and afterwards in 1961 he arrived in the UK to teach at a school in Luton. However, his longest service as a teacher was from 1965 to 1983 at Latymer Upper School, Hammersmith - one of the leading public schools in London.

He was a man of phenomenal vision and capability and took on the tasks of building the different pillars that would form an infrastructure for the Tamils in the UK. While teaching at Latymer, he also inaugurated the Association of Commonwealth Teachers (1966); founded the West London Tamil School (1978); founded the Tamil Times (1981); and founded the International Tamil Foundation (1988). We could have thought that Jeyam would rest on his laurels after creating these organisations. But, even in his advancing age and with his failing health, he felt strongly that there existed another void amongst us, which was to represent the Tamil cause with intellectual vigour in the English media. Towards this goal, he was inspired again, in March this year to enlist with his customary tenacity some of us as writers to found the Tamil Writers' Guild of which I am the first President. In his declining months, with both his legs giving way, he still came to our meetings as our Patron and contributed with his wisdom and experience to get TWG functioning. This was his swan song and we wish to invite more of you to join it as a lasting memorial to his irrepressible and indomitable spirit.

It would have been impossible for anyone else to start even one or two of these organisations and involve so many leading Tamil academic and professional figures in them. The vibrancy and growth of some of these organisations even to this day is a testimony to Jeyam Thamotheram's powers of persuasion, dedication, organisation and intellectual ability. He would be on the telephone from morning to evening, calling people and exhorting them or cajoling them to do something for the good of the Tamil

people and their cause. Countless are the times that Jeyam has worked the telephones relentlessly to raise substantial monies to save Tamil newspapers and journals from financial insolvency.

He was respected and loved by the people that he knew - and there were many of them - and they trusted him and gave willingly for the causes that he sponsored. He was a true friend and a soul mate to a number of people and would instantly rally to their support in their illnesses and in their hour of need. He was truly a great man, a giant among men for he thought not of himself but of the community and others who were more in need. He was an old-fashioned gentle-

man, courteous and well mannered but also doughty and courageous and prepared to stand firm for his principles. We are all better for having known him.

Throughout his life he embraced students and people of all religions and backgrounds and he did this from the strength of his own Christian upbringing and values. Some of these friendships that were formed as a teacher in the 1950s have lasted for over 50 years and even to this day there are some of his former students and associates who have maintained their close friendship with him. Their love for him and his love for them has been undiminished over these many long years.

He was one of the founders of the

London Tamil Christian Congregational church in Putney and in the moving service of prayer and thanksgiving in that very church on 4 th November 2005 attended by many hundreds, our prayers have joined those of his family to wish him our fondest farewell when we know he has gone to join his loving God and creator in heaven. We wish to convey our love and deepest sympathy to his sorrowing wife and children and their families and pray that the good Lord will grant them peace of mind and his blessings. We grieve the loss of this colossus among us but we also celebrate the life of one so special and touched by God. May his soul rest in peace.

'An outstanding community leader'

P Rajanayagam, Editor, Tamil Times

The following is a tribute paid by Mr P Rajanayagam, Editor of Tamil Times, to C J Thamotheram who passed away on 27 October 2005 at a remembrance gathering following the funeral on 4 November 2005:

"Today not only do we mourn, but also celebrate the full and eventful life of Mr C J Thamotheram who distinguished himself among members of his community in the UK and elsewhere as a towering figure. He earned his place in the hearts and minds of his compatriots and in their history by his total dedication and commitment to the advancement of their interests.

All of us are born as individuals and most of us lead our lives primarily as individuals. Throughout our lives, most of us are engaged in pursuits of personal advancement and the promotion of the interests of our close kith and kin. But a few refuse to be circumscribed by this narrow and restrictive pursuit as their purpose in life. Such people by their actions, contributions to and sacrifices for the society in which they live, transcend and transform as institutions. And in course of time, these individuals-turned-institutions become the pillars upon which the whole society depends. And no one can doubt that Mr Thamotheram became such an institution during his life time.

Mr Thamotheram can be described as a born rebel with a cause. A committed Christian, but in his younger days he did not hesitate to raise the red flag as a leading trade unionist belonging to the All Ceylon Union of Teachers some fifty-five years ago.

Many would describe Mr Thamotheram as a pioneer in almost all activities that concerned the Tamil people in the UK. His involvement covered a wide

spectrum of activities - social, cultural, or political. He was a man of action and not mere talk. The organisations he had helped to initiate and function are countless. As a teacher and educationist by profession, his founding of the West London Tamil School was no doubt a pioneering effort which in later years made an invaluable contribution to the children of the Tamil community in the field of education. There are others who would dwell in detail on what can be described as a monumental contribution by Mr Thamotheram thereby earning for himself the position of a great community leader to the wider diaspora.

Though I was associated with Mr Thamotheram and his wide ranging activities, particularly those of the Standing Committee of Tamil Speaking People (SCOT), since 1977, the year 1981 was to prove crucially important in my own future life. My tryst with destiny for the next quarter of a century was determined when Mr Thamotheram invited me to a meeting at his residence with 10 or 15 others at which it was decided to bring out an English language monthly journal. This was the time when the ethnic conflict was fast escalating into an armed conflict. The burning of the Jaffna Public Library in May 1981 and the communal violence unleashed in August 1981 and the sense of outrage felt by most of us was the catalyst for the launching of this journal. The first issue of **Tamil Times** was published in October 1981 and significantly this month marks its

25th Anniversary.

Let me take this opportunity to place on record the fact that without the sustained effort and immense contribution made by Mr Thamotheram as the founding Chairman of Tamil Times, from its inception until the end of 1987, the journal would not have been born, would not have seen the light of day, and would not have survived even a few months.

It must be recognised that when Tamil Times was started, there were no computer, internet or e-mail facilities. Communication was mainly by post and telephone was prohibitive in terms of cost. Everything had to be done manually, including writing of address labels before posting to subscribers. Gathering of news based on facts and articles were very difficult and time consuming. Very few were prepared to donate much needed funds for printing and distribution. The problems seemed insurmountable. What the situation demanded was an all consuming effort on the part of those few who were involved. However, it was primarily due to the strength of the founding principles of Tamil Times and the untiring perseverance and sustained dedication of its founding Chairman Mr Thamotheram that ensured the publication of this journal in the ensuing years. Mr Thamotheram's persistence and his capacity for energising, persuading and on occasions cajoling and commanding others to join in the common effort played a decisive role in the journal appearing month after month in the years of its infancy and thereafter.

During recent years I have been visiting Mr Thamotheram and his wife Mrs. Florence Thamotheram at their residence in west London mainly motivated by concern for his health. In spite of his failing health during the last few years of his

life, what I found was that he was a man who could not resist being active or desist from urging others to be active in an endeavour he thought was important. During these visits, what I also noted was that he was continually characterised by a sense of restlessness, always wanting to do something which he regarded as being in the interest of the community.

Very much associated with all his activities was his wife, Mrs. Florence

Thamotheram. I have known her as long as I have known Mr Thamotheram, and have been in contact with her particularly during recent years. I do not think that Mr Thamotheram could have contributed so much to the community without the active support and willing co-operation from his wife and her sense of self-sacrifice. The community today owes a great debt of gratitude to her for her own sacrifices. □

'A pioneer of institutions'

Extracts from the tribute paid by Mr. Neville Jayaweera:

"As you have heard many speakers say, Jeyam was a brilliant mathematician, one of a galaxy of brilliant students of mathematics who came out of Hartley College Jaffna, among whom was Prof. C.J. Eliezer who went on to become Professor of Mathematics in the Colombo University, but himself had to pursue his career abroad because of discriminatory policies perpetrated upon his fellow Tamils. Jeyam could have pursued a career in the prestigious Ceylon Civil Service, but instead opted for the far nobler vocation of teaching. Many leading secondary schools in then Ceylon sought to employ him as their mathematics teacher but, as a practising Methodist Christian, he opted to serve in Ceylon's premier Methodist institution, Wesley College. However, when in the fullness of time it

was Jeyam's turn to be appointed Principal, the discriminatory policies which by that time were in full bloom, took toll again and he was denied what was his legitimate right. Those who knew Jeyam and who were acquainted with the rights and wrongs of the situation were aghast and outraged. Jeyam resigned his job as a teacher at Wesley, opted out of the profession, and after a short stint with the British Council (I think) in Colombo, he migrated to the UK.

However, a man so richly endowed by God would not let his many skills and attributes wither on the vine. In the UK, Jeyam went on to pioneer many institutions and activities to improve the prospects and the quality of life of the Tamil diaspora who were by the mid 70s growing into a steady stream.....

"It would not be an exaggeration to say of Jeyam that he was to the Tamil Diaspora, in the UK as well as in other countries, what Martin Luther King had been to the black people in the USA of the 1960s. Jeyam was deeply hurt but was neither embittered nor discouraged. He had felt the searing pains and carried the scars of injustice, but would not allow himself to be deterred from his vision. Like Martin Luther King, Jeyam had caught a larger vision. To the very end he believed that it is still possible for all the communities who comprise the fabric of SL, the Sinhala, the Tamils, the Moors and the Burghers and all religions, to live in peace and amity and without recourse to war. He hoped and prayed that the discriminatory policies followed by successive governments of SL would be turned around and that wisdom and reason would triumph over injustice, bitterness and conflict.

Whether Jeyam's dream will ever be realised, and whether the Tamil people of SL will ever gain the Promised Land, remains an open question. Notwithstanding, it is the measure of Jeyam's greatness and his quality as an exceptional human being, that despite all the evidence to the contrary he continued to the end to believe in his vision.

May his vision be realised in full and may his Soul Rest in Peace."

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Rajapakse has been a loyal party member, sticking with his party at the worst of times. He accepted the leadership and vision of those who were his superiors in the party hierarchy. Now it is he who is expected to give that leadership and vision. He can continue to listen to a variety of views and seek to operate within a consensus. But he will have to give leadership in forging that consensus. The most difficult problem that President Rajapakse will have to face is to convince the LTTE that they can get into a peace process with him within the framework of a united country. It appears that the LTTE's experience of negotiating with Opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe convinced them that what the separation they sought to gain was not possible with him. It was because of this anxiety with the peace process that they withdrew from peace talks with Mr Wickremesinghe's government in April 2003. Therefore his offer in his election manifesto to recommence the peace process from the point it got stalled in 2003 did not hold great promise to them.

On the other hand, the three main principles of a new peace process articulated by the President would undoubtedly prove to be unattractive to the LTTE. These are that power sharing will be within the framework of the unitary state, that the role of the international community in the peace process needs to be rethought, and that the peace process must be more inclusive and involve more parties than the government and LTTE. He may have to focus on getting more rather than less international involvement in the peace process.

Next steps

In order not to alienate himself from the goodwill of the international community President Rajapakse could articulate the positions on the peace process of this party set out by former President Chandrika Kumaratunga as his own. He would also need to unify his victorious coalition on this basis in order to adopt a pro-active and consistent approach to the peace process. A pro-active approach could begin soon with direct dialogue with the LTTE leadership as promised by the President in the course of his election

campaign with the purpose of engaging the LTTE in problem solving actions. If accompanied by a positive response from LTTE, these steps can transform the stagnant peace process into a dynamic one that meets the just aspirations of all communities.

The President needs to continue to build upon the gains achieved by the governments headed by former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and President Chandrika Kumaratunga. Landmark agreements with the LTTE include the Ceasefire Agreement and the Oslo Declaration on federalism which provide the foundations for lasting peace. The international community too needs to make a greater visible commitment to supporting those agreements. Perhaps the ideal scenario will be one in which President Rajapakse and Opposition leader Wickremesinghe team up in one government along with other Tamil and Muslim parties to negotiate an interim administration for the north east with the LTTE. Hopefully this can thwart the threat of renewed war and separation that the LTTE's Heroes Day Celebration at Elephant Pass is likely to portend. □

The day the Tamils lost their franchise

D.B.S. Jeyaraj

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam made its presence felt in Sri Lanka's fifth Presidential election by disenfranchising a large segment of the North-Eastern Tamil people. Despite dubious claims to being the sole representatives of the Tamil people the LTTE had to unleash a "terror" campaign against innocent civilians to enforce what it called a "purakk-anippu" or boycott of the Presidential poll. Though violent intimidation enabled the LTTE to prevent many Tamils from voting it was unable to ensure a total boycott in many places.

While posters and leaflets calling for a boycott were widely circulated a systematic campaign of violence and terror also commenced prior to the poll. A series of explosions took place. In Jaffna grenades were thrown at five EPDP party offices on the eve of polls. Grenades and bombs were also thrown at Police patrols, army sentry posts, vehicles etc. A youth was tortured and beaten to death publicly at the Hindu College grounds. In Batticaloa a sub-post mistress who allegedly refused to hand over polling cards was brutally hacked to death. A climate of terror prevailed.

This terror continued from the early hours of the morning on election day. Bombs were thrown at Govt offices, polling booths, security posts and vehicles. Tyres and palm fronds were set on fire at key junctions and roads. Roadblocks were set up. Youths roamed streets looking out for potential voters. The LTTE motor cycle squads patrolled the roads. People on the roads were threatened. Many old people going out to vote were assaulted. Vehicles including buses were stoned or set on fire. Civilian voters and officials were injured in deliberate grenade attacks on polling stations. A few people returning after voting were set upon. One man had his inked finger cut off. The message was unmistakably clear - Don't vote.

The Sri Lanka Democracy Forum in a statement had a serious charge. It said, "LTTE cadres appointed by the New Left Front as polling agents (normally used in elections to challenge fraud and can only be appointed by a party with a candidate in the elections), were used by the LTTE to intimidate voters inside polling booths and to identify voters who could then be targeted for retribution". This was a dangerous development indeed.

Buses had been arranged for voters from LTTE controlled areas to come to Govt controlled areas and vote in the cluster booths. With a Tiger enforced boycott none dared to set out. In this climate of fear Jaffna district only had 1.5% voting. Of these, Kilinochchi division completely under Tiger control had only one person voting. Officials and journalists mobbed this solitary voter who claimed he had travelled by motor cycle, car and bus. It is however felt the man had been sent deliberately by the Tigers to survey the situation. The only vote cast "from" Kilinochchi was for Wickremasinghe. Funnily enough the election staff finished counting this single ballot only at 9. 13 pm which means five hours to count one vote!

In Batticaloa armed LTTE sentinels guarded access roads, bridges and ferry points to prevent people from Tiger controlled regions coming over and voting. Roadblocks were set up. Fires raged. A Tiger cadre interviewed by a news agency said that the decision to boycott elections was made by the people themselves. "We had nothing to do with it" he said. Continuing further he said "But we will not allow them to vote".

In some places people were "persuaded" to burn their poll cards in a bonfire. A few of these demonstrations took place in the presence of European election monitors. The EU monitors also withdrew from Chenkalladdy and Valaichenai due to the violent climate. Though voting percentages dropped slightly the situation in the East and Vavuniya-Mannar were not bad as in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, and Mullaitheevu.

The enforced boycott was ostensibly to demonstrate to the world at large that the Tamil people were disillusioned by Presidential candidates and had nothing to gain from a new President. The Tamils belonged to Tamil Eelam and were unconcerned about Sri Lanka was the message sought to be conveyed. Though the decision to be neutral and boycott polls was supposedly a people based decision it was obvious that the LTTE directed events. It was also clear that the LTTE did not want one particular candidate to win. The reasons for this stance are rather interesting and warrant close scrutiny.

The LTTE initially stated that it was neutral in the Presidential stakes and would play no role in it. It said that the

Tamil people were free to exercise their franchise if they desired or refrain from voting. The Tamil people were politically mature and would act appropriately, the LTTE said.

As time went on the LTTE detected a groundswell of support among Tamil people for United National Party candidate Ranil Wickremasinghe. The LTTE then changed its stance slightly and began berating both Mahinda Rajapakse and Ranil Wickremasinghe. Both had failed the Tamil people and were unworthy of Tamil support, they said.

In spite of all this the visible trend was a landslide of Tamil votes for Wickremasinghe. This spontaneous Tamil support was due to several reasons. Foremost among them was the hawkish policies of Rajapakse and his pacts with the hardline Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and Jathika hela Urumaya. The Tamil people abhorring a return to war felt quite rightly that a victory for Mahinda would hasten a resumption of armed hostilities.

There was also a feeling of gratitude towards Wickremasinghe. It was he who de-proscribed the LTTE and entered into a ceasefire with the Tigers. Besides Ranil advocated negotiations with the LTTE and was in favour of exploring a federal solution. His economic policies were also attractive. It was also realised that Wickremasinghe depicted as a traitor to the Sinhala people by his opponents for his dovish policies faced the risk of losing Sinhala votes on account of this. It was therefore necessary for Tamils to vote for Wickremasinghe to offset this, it was felt. The Presidential poll was of crucial importance to all minority communities. The hawkish Rajapakse and hardline cohorts posed a grave threat to their interests. The need of the hour was for the minorities to rally firmly behind the minority friendly candidate as a counterpoint to the extremist Sinhala-Buddhist juggernaut threatening to crush them underfoot.

The Muslim Congress, Ceylon workers Congress, Up Country Peoples Front, Western Province Peoples Front were all aligned with Wickremasinghe. Even the Catholic Bishops indicated indirect support. The Sri Lankan Tamils like the Muslims, Plantation Tamils and Catholics felt Wickremasinghe was the better of the two major candidates or from another perspective the lesser evil.

The LTTE however was unhappy about this natural proclivity on the part of Tamils in particular and the minorities in general to support Wickremasinghe. Viewing the situation only from its narrow, sectarian perspective the LTTE preferred a Wickremasinghe defeat and Rajapakse victory.

There were many reasons for this

perplexing approach. The most important one was that a hardline Government in Colombo was seen as more conducive to an outbreak of war. It was felt that international opinion would be firmly opposed to such a regime. This in turn was expected to be beneficial to the LTTE in the event it decided to resume its war.

On the other hand the LTTE was resentful and suspicious about Wickremasinghe. It was worried about the overwhelming Tamil support for him. It did not want a replay of the 1994 scenario where Chandrika Kumaratunga came to power with tremendous Tamil support. Also the Tigers feared the international clout of Wickremasinghe. In the event of war the World at large will support Colombo. It was felt that an amenable flexible President would reduce valid reasons for resuming war. There has been simmering dissent in Tiger circles for long that Wickremasinghe's ceasefire was a calculated device to weaken and debilitate the LTTE in the long run.

It was to some extent where the perceived interests of the LTTE diverged from the real interests of the Tamil people. The ordinary people did not want war and so preferred the best possible candidate who would avoid war and talk peace and power sharing with the LTTE. Common sense decreed that Wickremasinghe was better in that respect. It did not matter whether Wickremasinghe would deliver or not. Given Rajapakse's standpoint and allies Wickremasinghe was certainly the better of the two. Actually it was a case of Hobson's choice.

The LTTE however had a different perspective. For the Tigers Rajapakse was the better option than Wickremasinghe. The interests of the LTTE took precedence over that of the welfare of the Tamil people. Wickremasinghe was more dangerous in a war situation as opposed to Rajapakse. While the Sinhala electorate thinks that a Southern Veeraya like Rajapakse sent shivers down the Tiger spine the reality was different. It was a victory for Ranil decried by his adversaries as a weak traitor who posed a threat in LTTE perception. Given a direct choice the Tigers preferred Rajapakse as a "weak and ineffective" President.

This led to an ironic contradiction. The Tamil people wanted a President to talk peace with the Tigers and prevent war while the Tigers wanted a President who could disrupt peace and bring about war. In such a situation the franchise of the people became a casualty. This was the crux of the matter.

So the LTTE found that despite their

covert signals the Tamil people were planning to support Wickremasinghe overwhelmingly. This then led to a situation where the Tigers were forced to target Wickremasinghe more directly. Senior leader K.V. Balakumaran openly attacked Wickremasinghe and made it clear that he was the more "dangerous" of the two. Political Commissar S P Tamilselvan followed suit. The Tiger and pro - Tiger media launched an intensive offensive against Ranil.

A parallel exercise undertaken indirectly was an orchestrated campaign urging Tamils to desist from voting. Since the international community was observant the LTTE could not openly call for a boycott. So a number of front organizations notably student outfits were created that took up the cry.

Still the detectable tendency as far as the people were concerned was to vote and vote for Ranil. This was due to a realisation based on common sense that Wickremasinghe had to be supported to prevent Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony and resultant war. Whatever the LTTE desire, the ordinary Tamils grasped shrewdly that it was in their best interests to back Wickremasinghe. It was not as if Ranil was a positive choice. But compared to Rajapakse the people preferred him.

So the Tigers had to raise the ante further. They were compelled to call a press conference after a joint meeting with their proxy MPs of the Tamil National Alliance. It was announced there that the "People" had decided to boycott polls. The LTTE-TNA combine was simply expressing their wishes. But Mr. Sambandan, the leader of the TNA, gave the game away when he said that he hoped the people would accept their thinking. It was clear that the boycott was being imposed on the Tamil people.

Despite these moves the Tigers had to officially maintain a position of "detachment". The fiction that the people were going to boycott was publicised to a great extent. Yet it was necessary to pay lip service to the notion that the Tamil people were free to decide whether they wanted to vote or not. The people will choose wisely was hinted at heavily. Unfortunately for the LTTE the Tamil people were still of the opinion that they should vote in large numbers for Wickremasinghe.

With rival groups like the EPDP and Karuna faction urging a large voter turnout it was becoming a matter of prestige for the LTTE. The controversial comments made by Navin Dissanaike and Milinda Moragoda added further com-

plications. It was now becoming necessary to enforce a boycott and deprive Wickremasinghe of victory. He had to be taught an unforgettable lesson was the Tiger line of thinking. It was now out in the open and the Tiger hand behind the boycott call was becoming exposed. A call to declare election day a day of mourning and for people to stay indoors was made through a student front. Even public servants on election duty were asked to stay at home.

The pro-Mahinda elements had been accusing Ranil of a tie-up with the LTTE and charged that the Tigers were going to deliver the Tamil vote en-bloc to Ranil. Now they changed track and began gloating that the Tigers were now trying to sabotage Ranil. It was comical indeed to see people reverse their stances overnight and expose the venom they had against Ranil.

Wellwishers of Wickremasinghe and sections of the International community were aghast. Many lines of communication were opened with Kilinochchi. Several International community representatives and local politicians appealed to the LTTE. Representations were made to Anton Balasingham in London. Up Country Peoples Front leader Periyasamy Chandrasekaram went to Kilinochchi. After meeting Tamilselvan he returned to Vavuniya and spoke on the telephone with Ranil. He then went to Kilinochchi again to meet the LTTE political commissar. Some TNA Parliamentarians also took up Ranil's case.

As a result of these efforts the LTTE hierarchy in Kilinochchi gave an assurance that the Tigers would not enforce a boycott. They would merely call for a boycott but not adopt any further action to actually enforce a boycott. They would leave the matter entirely to the people. They would not stand in the way of voters wishing to exercise their franchise.

This was welcomed by the UNP. Wickremasinghe did not want any deal with the LTTE. All that he wanted was for the LTTE to refrain from enforcing a boycott and leave the choice in the hands of the Tamil people. The UNP was sure that the Tamil people would vote in large numbers for Ranil if the Tigers did not impose a boycott.

So Colombo newspapers ran stories of a change of heart in the LTTE. The LTTE website "Tamilnet" wanted an interview with Wickremasinghe to clarify the position. He refused but gave an extensive interview to a Colombo newspaper and Television explaining his stance. Wickremasinghe took great pains to elaborate on his position on the Tamil

question. This eased the minds of many who were troubled by the comments of Milinda and Navin. In the process Ranil may have alienated some Sinhala voters.

It was against this backdrop that the enforced boycott took place amid intimidatory violence and terror. The LTTE that had assured "non-interference" in the poll broke their promise. The LTTE launched a vicious campaign to prevent Tamils from voting thereby damaging Ranil's chances of victory. As far as the Wickremasinghe camp was concerned the LTTE had betrayed them. Frantic attempts to communicate with Kilinochchi failed. The LTTE in one more instance of doublespeak maintained that they were not interfering while goons did their utmost to restrict voting. Thamilselvan glibly parroted the refrain that the people were boycotting on their own.

The LTTE claims the boycott to be a tremendous success. Superficial observations by some journalists support this premise. Some came out with the blatantly wrong comment that Tamils in Colombo had also heeded the Tiger call and refrained from voting. The Tamilnet distorted and exaggerated this observation. The facts however are otherwise.

Polling divisions within the City and suburbs like Wattala and Dehiwela have large Tamil and Muslim concentrations. Wickremasinghe won from all these. His majority in Colombo West, Central, North and East were high. If Tamils boycotted in large numbers these results would not have been possible. The margins would be lower. The Up Country Tamil vote also was overwhelmingly for Wickremasinghe. This was seen in polling divisions with substantial Tamils in Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Matale and Badulla districts. It was the Tamil majority Nuwara Eliya-Maskeliya polling division that gave Wickremasinghe his biggest majority.

Even in the East the electoral divisions of Kalkudah, Batticaloa and Paddiruppu voted for Wickremasinghe. Though the LTTE prevented voters in the hinterland west of Batticaloa lagoon from voting Tamils in the littoral east of the lagoon voted in large numbers. The LTTE tries to make out that votes for Wickremasinghe were from the Muslims. This is incorrect. Paddiruppu for instance is 99% Tamil. Kalkudah is 65% Tamil. Batticaloa is 75% Tamil. The votes this time were more than in 1999 Presidential election. This was the case in Tamil majority Trincomalee electoral division. While Tamils who voted in the East were supportive of Wickremasinghe it was the Muslim vote that got divided to a certain extent. While the SLMC succeeded in delivering the majority Muslim vote to

Wickremasinghe, Muslim leaders like Athaullah, Ferial Ashraff, Segu Issadeen, Anwer Ismail, Ameer ali and Najeeb Abdul Majeed etc used their personal influence to deliver some votes to Mahinda.

The Tamil voters in Tiger controlled areas of Wanni were not allowed to vote by the Tigers. This resulted in votes dropping significantly. Yet Tamils in Govt controlled Mannar and Vavuniya voted in large numbers. These areas were overwhelmingly supportive of Ranil.

Ironically for the LTTE the only Northern electoral division voting for Mahinda was Mullaitheevu the Tiger citadel and heartland. While Tamils were prevented by the LTTE, Sinhala settlers in Army controlled Weli-Oya were able to vote. Thus Mahinda got more votes than Ranil there.

It is widely rumoured that MP's like Sivanathan Kishore, Selvam Adaikkalanathan, R Sambandan etc worked "clandestinely" to ensure Wickremasinghe got votes. In Batticaloa the Karuna factor also helped. While Karuna asked people to support Rajapakse he also wanted people to vote for anyone of their choice. This "mixed" signal strengthened the people's resolve to vote.

It is therefore crystal clear that the LTTE enforced boycott was not a huge success. Votes dropped only in areas under LTTE control or where they retained great influence. Even there the Tigers had to deploy systematic violence to prevent voting. In all other areas the Tamils voted in large numbers particularly in Batticaloa district, Trincomalee, Mannar, Vavuniya, Colombo and the Up Country. The Tamils clearly voted for Wickremasinghe. It is indeed noteworthy that the eleven electoral districts won by Rajapakse were predominantly Sinhala while the eleven won by Wickremasinghe were districts where the minority communities were in a majority or at least a sizeable chunk.

The bulk of the security forces in the North-East and Sinhala government officials were supportive of Rajapakse. The boycott favoured Mahinda because the Tamils if allowed to vote would have opted for Ranil. There was a convergence of interests therefore between the LTTE and Rajapakse in implementing an effective boycott. The overall majority was 186, 000 plus. If the Jaffna, Wanni and Eastern Tamils had voted in full strength there was every chance that Wickremasinghe would have got an extra 250 to 300, 000 votes. This would have clinched his victory. Ranil was cheated of success by the LTTE betrayal.

Though the Tigers and their minions

are waxing eloquent about their success and ability in determining the victor it is indeed a moot point as to the total political cost incurred. It may have been a different picture if the Tigers ensured victory of a dovish candidate. Here the felines have helped defeat the "dove" and helped install the "hawk" as president. Furthermore they have betrayed the man who de-proscribed them and signed a ceasefire pact. Bitter irony for Ranil is that it was the ceasefire which gave the LTTE much clout in Jaffna and other areas of the northeast.

With the EU monitors present the LTTE blundered greatly in enforcing a boycott. In the first place the LTTE demonstrated that their writ does not extend to all sections of the Tamil people and that a boycott could succeed in the North only due to terror and violence.

Depriving Tamils of the franchise was certainly not a plus point for the LTTE. What is worse is that this disenfranchisement was made possible through a campaign of violence and terror. The LTTE had exposed their insincere commitment to a negotiated settlement by helping defeat Ranil and enabling a Mahinda win. Under these circumstances the LTTE action can only bring negative repercussions. The temporary EU travel ban may become permanent. It is also possible that the EU could bring about a permanent ban on the LTTE. If that and a lot of other things happen this boycott can only be counterproductive.

The Tamils have for long lamented the disenfranchisement of Up Country Tamils by a Sinhala dominated Government in 1949. It is portrayed quite correctly as a grave violation of a fundamental right. It was decades later their franchise was restored, and they exercised it on November 17th too. Today the self-appointed sole representatives of the Tamil people have deprived a segment of the North-Eastern Tamils of their franchise rights. The Tigers are likely to learn, in more ways than one, that this disenfranchisement was a colossal blunder.

What is important however is that the Tamil people be spared victimisation for no fault on their part. It must be realised that the people if unfettered would have voted for Ranil.

The Northern Postal votes and voting pattern in other areas indicate this. A serious development of this election is that Rajapakse has won the bulk of Sinhala votes while Wickremasinghe got most non-Sinhala votes. The new President must realise that he has no mandate from the minorities particularly the Tamils. Rajapakse must display considerable sagacity in coping with this situation. □

(continued from page 21)

However, the Rajapakse Presidency is still in its infancy and it is too early for it to elaborate on so sensitive and emotional an issue. Critical to his impending negotiations with the LTTE would be how Rajapakse handles his electoral allies and foes as well as the tact with which he crafts a 'Southern consensus' that cannot be portrayed internationally by the Tigers as one that "falls short of Tamil aspirations."

The November 27 "Heroes Day" speech by the LTTE leader is one to be watched for parameters to be set by the Tigers for their engagement with Sri Lanka's new President. With regard to conflict resolution, Rajapakse's mandate is one best described in his own phrase - "for an honourable peace."

Silencing the guns of war, however, is meaningless unless bayonets melt into ploughs. Hence, it is equally important for Rajapakse to ensure that economic development flows to the under-developed regions across the country. Massive development of the strife-torn districts of the North-East, which lag behind by decades, is the crying need of the hour. Outside the North-East, the poll result clearly indicates the preference for Rajapakse in the under-developed regions and among sections that have little say in economic dynamics.

The overwhelming endorsement of Rajapakse in rural pockets has more to do with the basic realities of economic hardship than intangible constructs such as the structure of a state - be it unitary or federal. The election of Rajapakse to the highest political office also implies the continuity of a left-of-centre political and economic thinking, but tempered by the times.

It is such a well-calibrated interpretation of mandate that the new President will have to take to the drawing board when he charts out his project for a "new Sri Lanka."

Creating the Sri Lanka of President Rajapakse's aspirations necessarily requires the discarding of several existing moulds: majority apprehensions over political power-sharing, mutual distrust between the ethnic groups, festering wounds of ethnic discord, skewed economic development, and, above all, the bitter bipartisan politics of the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the UNP.

The "new Sri Lanka" could be built on several positive island-wide constructs: the mutually-felt need for hon-

Sivanandan on '7-7 and the Attack on Multiculturalism'

Ambalavanar Sivanandan was born in Sri Lanka in 1930 and emigrated to Britain in 1958 in the wake of the riots in Colombo. Working in London as a librarian at the Institute of Race Relations, he went on to become its director, a position which he maintains today. He is also the co-editor of the journal Race and Class, which he helped to establish. On 5 October 10 2005 he gave a talk at Goldsmiths' College, London, on '7-7 and the Attack on Multiculturalism'.

Sivanandan begins by outlining the relationship between the British contribution to the war on Iraq and its effect in motivating some members of the British population to carry out the July 7th suicide bomb attacks on the London Underground. For Sivanandan, there is not much dis-

tingtion between a war of liberation and the war on terror. However, he does not attempt to valorise the young men who blew themselves up in London, insisting rather that they were alienated by the failure of British society to offer values that were acceptable to them. The creation of the so-called Muslim 'ghettoes' in the UK is not the fault of 'multiculturalism', as has been stated recently by various British sources, but 'culturalism', a word which he prefers to use within this political context.

Sivanandan explains that the anti-racism struggles of the 1960s and 1970s came to a head in the conflagrations in Brixton in 1981. The ensuing Scarman Report introduced the concept of multiculturalism (or culturalism) into British political discourse. Lord Scarman's inquiry into the cause of the rioting between Police and mostly black youths emphasised the need for more police officers to be recruited from ethnic minorities. It also called for the government to solve the problem of racial disadvantage and to put a greater proportion of young black men into work. According to Sivanandan, its effect was to siphon Black protests against racism into the political mainstream. He insists that 'black' in the days of the anti-racism movement was 'a political colour, not a complexion', and that the government, sensing the potential for cross-cultural political change that this movement threatened, established a blueprint for cultural freedom and tolerance as long as it was maintained within the accepted human rights standards of the country. Transformative change was thus averted.

It is in the historical context that he introduces his work for *Race and Class*, which was one of the organisations that received financial support from the British government, post-Scarman. According to Sivanandan, the aim of *Race and Class* is

ourable ethnic co-existence, vast social similarities and, above all, the over-arching attribute of a *joie de vivre* that is so essentially Sri Lankan. Now is indeed the time to accentuate the similarities and submerge differences among the Sri Lankan peoples. President Rajapakse has certain distinct advantages compared to his predecessors. These include the longest spell of peace between the State and rebel armies, an evolving economy, and a mindset that is amenable to change. He also faces the challenge of an entrenched rebel group, holding territory and staking claim to a *de facto* state. In a nation that is still undergoing a painful socio-economic and political churning process, President Rajapakse made his decisive political ascent after challenging foes across the political spectrum. Now that he is vested with vast constitutional authority, backed by the inherent qualities of a mass-leader, the Sri Lankan nation looks forward to him making good on the twin promises he made at his inaugural: ushering in an honourable peace, and emerging as an inclusive, non-discriminatory leader of a new Sri Lanka. (The Hindu) □

'to do research to help the people who are victimised. We don't speak *to*, we speak *from*.' The intensity of his delivery makes him appear youthful despite his years. His rhetorical style and engaging manner help to camouflage his dialectical method of exposition: he is always personalising subjects and creating tension, thereby hoping to coerce productive argument instead of obliging apathy.

The year 1958 was for Sivanandan a 'double baptism of fire'. Fleeing his position as a bank manager after rioting connected to S W R D Bandaranaike's introduction of the Official Languages Act, he arrived in West London to find more rioting in Notting Hill between predominantly (although not wholly) black immigrant and white resident groups. This was the spark that forced him to reconsider his position and to take action against all forms of racism, which he began to do by writing a series of pamphlets on behalf of the Institute of Race Relations, allied with the journal *Race and Class*.

Substantial material from these pamphlets, along with numerous other essays and articles, are collected in the books *A Different Hunger* (1982) and *Communities of Resistance* (1990). They show a concern to represent diverse political and cultural subjects as well as a complex understanding of the past. His grasp of history seems effortless because it is so well-rehearsed. His words are designed to force commitment from his audience, so that they become participants who also feel themselves being weighed up by the terms of the argument. Positive discrimination and the accompanying attempts to make white people feel guilty about their racism is an utterly misconceived notion, claims Sivanandan, for it is the sense of shame, not guilt that needs to be brought out of them. 'Shame is a cathartic emotion', whereas 'guilt is asocial; it is not worked out with other people.'

He moves on to talk about more recent race-related events in Britain, beginning with the riots in Bradford, Burnley, and Oldham in 2001 – areas with large Muslim populations that apparently have nothing in common

with their white British neighbours. He explains that multiculturalism, anti-terrorism acts, and back-door immigration policies are Tony Blair's alibis for failing to own up to the destruction of Iraq. On this position he remains forthright throughout his talk and during the discussion that follows.

Indeed, when addressing the major political subject of the day he achieves a pitch of intensity that would not be out of place in a church pulpit. 'We tried to force democracy on Iraq, but Iraq forced democracy on us.' The price of the political lie has been purifying truth in the form of violence. His conclusion is that multiculturalism was a term that was used by the political establishment as an antidote to racism, but now it is being used to excuse the war on ter-

ror. A historical compromise has been converted into a government scapegoat.

This is not his last word, however. During the discussion, in which he allows no attempt by contributors to introduce academic language into what he considers to be 'real' subjects, he outlines his own political vision. It is a surprising move. It turns out that, far from being a radical, he has a deep and abiding respect for moments of historical progression. For Sivanandan, historical time is a fluid, not a static, concept, and the work of the past remains to be completed. He explains with passionate fervour how 'the Enlightenment is not over, the Reformation is not over', and that it is the endless task of those living in the present to ensure that their time does not slip away unfulfilled. It is an urgent message. □

People & Politics

End of a dynasty?

Many seem to think that the exit of Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga as Sri Lanka's Executive Presidency after 11 years may spell the end of the Bandaranaike dynasty that has played a crucial role in the island nation's politics since independence from Britain in 1948. In fact the political role of her late father, Soloman West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike (popularly called SWRD), who became Prime Minister in 1956, began very much earlier in the 1930s.

Her late mother, Mrs Srimavo Bandaranaike, who took the leadership of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party founded by her father (in 1951) when her husband's tenure was brutally cut short when he was felled by an assassin in 1959, became Prime Minister of the island in 1960 achieving the unique distinction of being the first woman elected Head of State in the

world.

The daughter of two Prime Ministers, Chandrika had to face another personal tragedy when her husband, film actor turned politician, Vijaya Kumaratunga, was cruelly gunned down within sight of their two small children in 1989 by the JVP during its second insurrection. Going into exile with her two small children for a few years, she returned to the island to lead the Peoples Alliance to parliamentary victory, become Prime Minister in August 1994 and later to be elected as executive President in November 1994. Prevented by the Constitution from standing for President again after two terms, Chandrika Kumaratunga is departing from high office after holding this all-powerful position for 11 years.

Whether she would continue a role in national politics would depend on the developments in the coming period. But no one is yet thinking of writing Chandrika's political requiem. Those who know the 'great survivor' that she is tend to think that her two terms as President may be over, but she is likely to remain as a force in national politics for some time to come.

At the beginning of the latest presidential campaign, it was decided that Chandrika's younger brother

Anura Bandaranaike would be appointed Prime Minister if Mahinda Rajapakse was elected as President, which would have meant that the Bandaranaike dynastic role in the national politics of Sri Lanka would continue. But after the rather unhelpful and even negative role that he played during the campaign, the new President has rejected Anura's claim and appointed another party man, Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, as Prime Minister. Whether Anura will be offered another ministerial portfolio is yet to be seen. Now isolated in the party and with the Bandaranaike magic seemingly fading with his sister's exit, Anura does not seem destined for national leadership.

The belief that Chandrika may not yet be a spent force can turn out to be true. The constitutional prohibition that one cannot serve more than two terms only applies to the post of President. In the event, if as promised by the new President, the executive presidency is abolished through a constitutional change and the country returns to a British-style parliamentary system, Chandrika may have another opportunity to aim at the top post thereby securing a continuing Bandaranaike dynastic role in the political affairs of the country.

Peace Chief quits post

Nov 9 - Dr Jayantha Dhanapala, Secretary General of the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) in Sri Lanka announced his resignation from his post to "devote time to other obligations," media reports in Colombo said. Jayantha Dhanapala was also acting as a Senior Adviser to Sri Lanka's President Kumaratunga. Both appointments took effect from June 1, 2004.

The complexities of the conflict and hard positions taken by the parties involved proved difficult for the diplomatic skills of Dr Dhanapala to make any headway in the peace process during his 15-month stewardship at Sri Lanka's Peace Secretariat.

Jayantha Dhanapala was the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs from

1998 to 2003. He served for many years as a member of the Sri Lanka Foreign Service and was Ambassador in Geneva and in Washington D.C. In February 1998 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan appointed Dhanapala as a Commissioner in the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the Head of the Special Group visiting the Presidential sites in Iraq.

It is learnt that the Government is taking action to reorganize the Government Peace Secretariat. Already Jayantha Dhanapala, Secretary General of the Peace Secretariat has tendered his resignation to the former President and his resignation comes into effect from 30 of November.

It is learnt that President has so far not finalized whether to request Jayantha Dhanapala to remain as the Head of the Peace Secretariat or to bring in a new person who would be more amenable to new thinking of the Presidency regarding the peace process.

LTTE's Heroes Day

It is learnt that the LTTE will conduct its Heroes Day ('Marveerar Day') celebrations at the site of the former Elephant Pass Army camp on November 27. The LTTE has erected a huge stage at the site of the former Army camp, which was once a stronghold of the Military in the North. The former Army camp has been cleared and cleaned up by the LTTE in preparation for its Heroes Day celebrations, and a giant LTTE flag has also been hoisted at the location. The setting has also been elaborately decorated with red and yellow LTTE flags and a monument to commemorate LTTE cadres killed in the April 2000 Elephant Pass attack has been constructed.

Further, the main A9 road has been lined on either side with red and yellow flags, the colours of the LTTE, from Elephant Pass to Kilinochchi. Elephant Pass is currently under LTTE control.

In the aftermath of the LTTE's enforced boycott of the recently held presidential poll and in the context of the new President, Mahinda

Rajapakse's stated view that the Ceasefire Agreement signed with the LTTE in February 2002 should be reviewed and a new approach to the peace process should be taken, many analysts are waiting with much anticipation the LTTE leader V Pirapaharan's annual statement on 27 November in which they expect him to set out the stance that the LTTE will adopt in the new situation with a new President.

'Thamileelam' national anthem

Oct 27 - An invitation has been extended to "Tamil bards and minstrels with patriotic fervor" to compose a Thamileelam national anthem. The invitation to the poets in the Northeast and among the Tamil diaspora came in an announcement by the Media Unit of the LTTE, from its base in Kilinochchi, on Thursday, 27 October. Poets are given time till November 27th, the Tamil Eelam Martyrs Remembrance Day, to give final touches to their composition.

The media unit of the LTTE recommended that the National Anthem written in confident prose should have a maximum of 18 stanzas in "immaculate Tamil," extol the "virtues of those who sacrificed their lives in Tamil struggle, celebrate the unique qualities of exclusiveness and resourcefulness of the Tamil Homeland, and manifest the resoluteness, dedication and the aspirations of the Tamil People for freedom and dignity." The National Anthem should "symbolize the history of our struggle and victories to future generations," the media unit said.

Thamileelam National Flag and the National Flower have already been established.

The Tiger flag, leaving out the movement's name in the flag, was designated as the Thamileelam National Flag by the Tigers fifteen years ago, on the Martyrs Remembrance Day in November 1990. The flower, Gloriosa Lily, was designated as Thamileelam National flower by the LTTE administration during the Martyr remembrance week in November 2003. □

NEWS TRACK

Three children, soldier injured in shoot-out: Oct 23 - Three children were injured in Batticaloa Sunday (23) morning in a shhotout between Sri Lanka Army soldiers and unidentified gunmen who fired at SLA soldiers manning a sentry wounding one soldier. The incident took place around 8:45 a.m. The soldiers were manning a sentry point at the Zahira College on Rosario Road, 2 km north of Batticloa town. The children were refugees stationed in the refugee camp at the Zahira College. The children were identified as Nadarajah Sasikaran, 4, Pirapharan Venitha, 7, and Thavarajah Aniksha, 7. The SLA soldier was identified as J. M. A. Samitha, 20. The injured children and the soldier were rushed to Batticaloa hospital. The gunmen who fired at the two SLA soldiers manning the sentry point escaped from the site in a motorbike.

Two wounded in grenade attack: Oct 24 - Two motorbike-riding men Sunday (23) evening lobbed a grenade in front of a shop near Batticaloa Railway station wounding two civilians, Batticaloa police said. The incident took place on Boundary Road at 7.25 p.m. The wounded civilians, Mr. Sinnathamby Thuraisingam, 55, and Mr. Ranjan Dineshkumar, 16, were rushed to Batticaloa Hospital.

Policeman shot, wounded in Batticaloa Oct 24 - Motorbike-riding gunmen followed and shot a Sri Lanka Police constable, Mr. Nihal Pathirana, 42, who was on his way to his post at Jeyanthipuram in Batticaloa. The incident took place around 4:30 p.m. Monday (24) near St. Anthony's Church in Karuvepankerny, 4 km north of Batticaloa.

Suspect Gopi released: Oct 26 - Ms Sarojini Kusala Weerawardene, Colombo Chief Magistrate Wednesday (26) ordered the release of Mr. Kathiramalai Vaitheehan alias Gopi alias Veerapandiyan who was remanded on reports from the Jaffna police that he was involved in the abduction and murder of Mr. Charles Wijewardene, Jaffna Senior Superintendent of Police, at Inuvil in Jaffna district on 4th August 2005.

For security reasons the case came up for inquiry in the special court in Welikada prison. The Chief Magistrate directed the Police to release the suspect on a report filed by the Attorney General that there was no evidence against the suspect to file indictment against him, legal sources said. The Attorney General's report indicated that none of the witnesses including police officers were able to identify Mr Gopi at the identification parade held in Colombo Chief Magistrate's Court.

Three-wheeler driver shot dead: Oct 27 - Unidentified shot dead the driver of a three wheeler at Kannagipuram in Orr's Hill, suburb in Trincomalee town. The dead has been identified as Mr. Anura Abeyaratne aged 24 a Sinhalese, and a resident of Sumedhagama, a suburb of the east port town, Trincomalee Police said. On receipt of information police and soldiers of the Sri Lanka Army

rushed to the site following tension in the area. Mr. Arthur Tveiten, head of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission in Trincomalee also visited the site. The Police removed the body of the dead to the mortuary of the Trincomalee base hospital.

Call to ignore presidential poll: Oct 27 - In an appeal to the Tamil people, the Students' Association of Higher Educational Institutions, Jaffna District, has warned Tamil voters not to be "hoodwinked" by promises of the Sri Lankan Presidential candidates. The organisation has argued that a Tamil vote would imply that the Tamils still trust the Sinhala leaders to resolve the Tamil conflict. In an appeal issued Thursday (Oct 27) from Jaffna, the Students Association asked Tamils to be wary of the election promises the candidates are making from their election propaganda platforms.

Although there are thirteen candidates contesting, the real contest is between Mahinda Rajapakse and Ranil Wickremasinghe, the candidates of the two major Sinhala political groups, the Jaffna students pointed out.

"Encouraged by his extremist and nationalist supporters, Rajapakse has openly stated he would never compromise on the Unitary State, never acknowledge the existence of the traditional homeland of the Tamils and never execute the Tsunami rehabilitation plan, revealing his chauvinist stand," the Students' appeal explains.

On the other hand, the Tamil students' body warns against the "slimy moves" of Ranil Wickremasinghe, who immediately after signing the Cease-fire Agreement three years ago, had exclaimed that with the Agreement he had prevented the LTTE from taking up arms, prevented deaths of "Sinhala soldiers" in the battle field and laid an "international network to have the LTTE ostracised."

US, Sri Lanka sign MoU on combating terrorism: Oct 29 - Government of Sri Lanka and the United States of America signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Colombo Thursday, 27 October, to assist Sri Lanka to enhance its abilities to fight terrorism and to strengthen the co-operation between the two countries in tackling international terrorism. The agreement was signed on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka by the Secretary to the Ministry of Public Security, Law and Order Thialk Ranavirajah and by the US Ambassador to the country Jeffery Lunstead.

The MOU makes provision for assistance to Sri Lanka to provide training and technical co-operation towards enhancing the anti-terrorism abilities of Sri Lanka, to deter and counter terrorism, strengthen co-operation between the two countries and to further their common interest in detecting terrorists and terrorist groups from engaging in international terrorist acts and increasing respect for human rights. The assistance will be provided in three stages, through needs assessment, course and consultation offerings, and ongoing programme reviews.

Grenade lobbed at SLA checkpoint: Oct 29 - Two motor-

bike-riding men lobbed a hand grenade into a Sri Lanka Army post located in front of Narikkundu kulam on Rakka Road in Jaffna around 1:30 p.m. Saturday (Oct 29), Sri Lanka Army said. The grenade fell into their bunker, the SLA sources added. No casualties were reported. Additional troops and riot police were deployed at the site following the incident. SLA sources said that their Jaffna office of 51-2 Division has lodged a complaint to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission on the incident. The SLA checkpoint is located close to St. John Bosco School and the ICRC office in Jaffna.

Rice mill worker shot dead: Oct 29 - Two unidentified gunman riding in a motorbike shot and killed Mr. H.G.M. Abeyaratna, 38, a rice mill worker at Kolavil, 2 km south of Akkaraipattu town, Saturday (Oct 29) at 9:30 a.m. The rice mill worker, a Sinhalese from Akurana in Kandy, married to a Tamil woman and a father of a child, was residing at Kannakipuram Refugee Camp when he was shot dead while he was cycling to work on Akkaraipattu-Pottuvil Road. The assailants shot the victim twice at his head with a 9 mm handgun, Police said blaming the LTTE for the killing. Akkaratipattu is located 64 km south of Batticaloa town.

Top intelligence officer killed: 30 Oct - Lt. Col. Tuwan Rizvi Meedin, a high ranking senior intelligence officer attached to Colombo's Second Army Intelligence Unit, was shot and killed inside his car by unknown gunmen Saturday around 10:30 p.m. (29 Oct) near his home at Uthaya Mawatha in Kiribathgoda, a large suburb of Colombo, situated on the Colombo Kandy Road between Kelaniya and Kadawatha.

Meedin is the second senior intelligence officer to be shot dead in Colombo in recent months. He was 39 years old and a father of two children. Police sources said that the shots were fired by an assassin who was inside Meedin's car and that the Police were investigating two Sinhala persons alleging that the suspects were hired by the LTTE to assassinate the Intelligence officer. He was rushed in an unconscious state to the Colombo Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries at 1:30 a.m. Sunday, Police said. A news release issued by the Sri Lanka Army morning said that Meedin had gone out with his friends late night on Saturday and that a friend of him called his wife at home and informed her that Meedin was lying dead near her house.

Deep penetration group retreats: Oct 30 - A Liberation Tigers cadre was killed when the Tigers launched a counter attack on a Deep Penetrating group of armed operatives who had moved 5 km into LTTE controlled Vaharai area Sunday at 4:50 a.m., Batticaloa Commanding Office spokesman of the LTTE, S. Theeralan, told media, according to TamilNet. The paramilitary group retreated with the dead and wounded, leaving behind a GPS device, communications equipments and explosives. The group used civilian captives in the village as human-shield to withdraw from the site, Theeran told media. The dead LTTE cadre, Kathirgamathamby Selvan alias Parthipan,

was from Piyavedduvan in Valaichenai, Theeralan said.

Grenade attack on SLA vehicle: Oct 30 - Two unknown assailants who followed a Sri Lanka Army (SLA) truck in a motorbike hurled a hand grenade into the vehicle near Mirusuvil junction in Thenmaradchy, Jaffna district at about 6.30 pm on 30 October. Unconfirmed reports said the explosion injured at least two SLA soldiers riding in the vehicle. The Palaly SLA command has not reported on the incident. SLA soldiers opened fire after the incident. No one was injured. The vehicle was travelling towards Kodikamam along A9 when the incident happened. Assailants escaped on the motorbike, according to sources. This attack follows another hand grenade attack on Sri Lanka Army post located in front of Narikkundu kulam on Rakka Road in Jaffna around 1:30 pm on the previous day.

Mother, daughter wounded in grenade attack: Oct 30 - A 32-years-old mother and her 16-years-old daughter were injured when two unidentified motorbike-riding men lobbed a grenade into their house located on Sea Road behind the Special Task Force (STF) camp in Aryampathy, 6 km south of Batticaloa. The incident took place at 5:30 pm on 30 October. The injured women, Mrs. K. Pushpakumar and Miss K. Jasintha, were rushed to Batticaloa Hospital.

Two wounded in grenade attack: Oct 30 - Unidentified men riding in a motorbike lobbed a grenade into a Sri Lankan police post located in front of the Kondavil post office, seriously wounding two policemen and a Sri Lanka Army soldier. The incident took place around 10:00 p.m. Sunday, 30 October. The policemen were rushed to Jaffna Hospital in serious condition. The soldier was rushed to Palaly Military Hospital. The SLA soldier was providing security to the policemen who had set up a security post near the post office, police said blaming the LTTE for the attack.

Soldiers wounded in grenade attack: Oct 31 - Two Sri Lanka Army soldiers were seriously wounded when unidentified men riding in a motorbike lobbed a grenade into a SLA sentry in Thiraimadu, 5 km east of Batticaloa town around 8:30 pm on 30 October. Four SLA soldiers were on duty when two attackers lobbed a grenade into their sentry post, police said accusing the LTTE for the incident. Corporal M.D. Sarathchandra, 27, and N. Prasannakumar, 25, were the soldiers who were rushed to Batticaloa Hospital with serious injuries.

SLMM condemns killing of intelligence officer: Oct 31 - In a press release issued Monday, 31 October, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) condemned the killing of Lieutenant Colonel Meedin in Colombo on 29 October and urged "the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to work together to end the violence in the country so that the confidence between the two Parties can be restored and the Peace Proc-

ess continued."

Full text of the release follows: The SLMM condemns the killing of the senior officer of the Military Intelligence Corps, Lt. Col. Meedin, which took place on Saturday night. Our sympathies are with the family of the deceased. Over 190 people have been killed in Sri Lanka since the beginning of the year in suspected political killings. The SLMM has on countless occasions expressed major concerns over this constant violence. The killings have gradually undermined the CFA and resulted in mistrust and bad atmosphere between the Parties.

The SLMM would like to urge the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to work together to end the violence in the country so that the confidence between the two Parties can be restored and the Peace Process continued.

Grenade attack on Police in Jaffna: Oct 31 - A Policeman was killed and three were injured near Kandarmadam Junction on Palaly Road, 2 km north of Jaffna town, around 7.00 pm on 31 October. Unidentified men lobbed a grenade on a Police Jeep killing its driver and wounding the three policemen. The killed policeman, identified as Mr. Lalith, was the driver of the vehicle. The 3 policemen injured in the incident, Mr. A.J. Nishankamalara, 34, K.W. Gunawardene, 33, and R.P. Piyadasa, 45, were admitted to Jaffna Hospital, medical sources said. This is the third grenade attack to be reported in Jaffna within the last 24 hours.

Rifles, grenades seized in Batticaloa: Oct 31 Police sources in Batticaloa said that the Sri Lanka Army had seized two T-56 rifles, six grenades and a 9 mm pistol in the search conducted by the Sri Lanka Army in Batticaloa on 31 October. Four Tamil youths, suspected to belong to the LTTE were held as suspects, police said. The arms and ammunition were seized during the cordon and search operation conducted in the northern suburbs of Batticaloa town, police further said.

Ex-LTTE members shot dead: Nov 2 - Unidentified gunmen shot and killed a former member of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam Wednesday (Nov 2) morning 8:30 a.m. in Kurunchi Nagar in Valaichenai, 32 km north of Batticaloa. The victim, Mr. Sellathamby Punniyamoorthy, 26, a father of two children, was kidnapped three days earlier by the assailants. The incident took place on Vishnu Temple Road at Pattiyadichenai in Kurunchi Nagar in Valaichenai. The victim, a resident of Vinayagapuram, Valaichenai, is reported to have left the LTTE two years ago.

On the previous day, another ex-LTTE member, Mr. Kandasamy Sasikumar, 22, from Kiran in Valaichenai, was shot and killed by gunmen at 1:30 a.m. Five gunmen entered the house of the victim and took him a few meters away before they shot him.

Three grenade attacks in Jaffna: Nov 2 - Three Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers and two policemen were injured in 3 different grenade attacks in Jaffna Wednesday (Nov 2)

night. Two Sri Lankan policemen were wounded when unidentified assailants lobbed a grenade into a police post in Navanthurai, a coastal suburb of the Jaffna town around 9:00 p.m. Two soldiers were wounded in Malusanthi junction near Nelliyadi in Vadamaradchi at 9:30 p.m. when unidentified assailants lobbed a grenade at an Army checkpoint.

The third incident was reported in Atchuvveli, 15 km northeast of Jaffna town where two unidentified men riding in a motorbike on Valvetithurai-Atchuvveli Road lobbed a grenade into an army post in Atchuvveli town wounding a soldier. Wounded policemen were admitted at Jaffna Hospital for treatment and the three SLA soldiers were rushed to Palaly Military Hospital, police said.

Meanwhile, tension prevailed in Gurunagar, another coastal suburb of Jaffna, from 7:00 a.m. as soldiers blocked civilian movement following grenade incident at an SLA checkpoint. A grenade lobbed at the checkpoint by unknown assailants did not explode. The police blamed the LTTE for the grenade attacks.

Boycott postal voting urged: Nov 2 - An organisation styling itself as the "Consortium of Tamil Speaking Peoples Trade Unions in Jaffna" appealed to public servants in the district to boycott postal voting for the November 17 presidential poll. The statement charged that the presidential candidates have once again ignored the Tamil speaking people by their "impractical promises." The move by the organisation is believed to have been instigated by the LTTE.

Four injured in shooting incident: Nov 3 - Unidentified assailants opened fire at a tri-shaw transporting an EPDP member and the policemen providing escort to his vehicle. Three policemen, the EPDP cadre and the tri-shaw driver were wounded and rushed to Batticaloa Hospital. The incident took place on November 3 near a police post located north of Batticaloa town on Trincomalee Road around 10:30 am.

The EPDP member, Mr. Arumugam Pathmakanthan, 24, had gone to Gnanasuriyam Square with Police escort to collect Thinamarusu weekly paper from a transport agent when they came under attack. The policemen opened fire at the assailants who shot at them. However, the attackers managed to flee from the site, police said adding that the gunmen had used T-56 rifle to fire at the victims. The policemen, Mr. Ranjith Anuruddha, 35, Mr. Karuna Tissa, 39, and Mr. K. Jayaratna, wounded in the incident, were attached to Batticaloa Police. The wounded tri-shaw driver has been identified as M. Siriwardena, 30.

Grenade attack at Jaffna SLA sentry point: Nov 4 - Sri Lanka Army (SLA) sentry point located near the gas station close to Jaffna Windsor theatre came under grenade attack by unknown assailants 2.50 pm Friday (Nov 4). No one was injured. The sentry received extensive damages. Following the incident additional SLA troops were brought to the town. Security forces established checkpoints at several locations and started checking the pub-

lic. The military accused the LTTE for the grenade attack.

Grenade attack on Muhamalai LTTE post: Nov 4 - Two men who entered the Liberation Tigers controlled area and attempted to lob grenades at the checkpoint were shot while they tried to escape from the Muhamalai checkpoint, LTTE sources said. One of the attackers was later rushed to Chavakacheri hospital by the Sri Lanka Army. The incident took place around 1:00 pm on November 4 when the attackers, caught by the personnel manning the checkpoint, tried to escape from the site, they added.

The wounded person, Mr. Vijeyavarman Mathimugarajah, 27, believed to be one of the attackers, was later transferred to Jaffna Hospital from Chavakacheri Hospital, medical sources said. The fate of the other attacker is not known. Mr. Vijeyavarman Mathimugarajah, is the son of late Mr. Pon. Mathimugarajah, the former secretary of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), Jaffna Branch. Pon. Mathimugarajah was gunned down in December 1998. The Tigers were blamed for the killing by the Sri Lankan Police.

Voting decision rests with Tamil people: Nov 4 - Mr. C. Ilamparithi, Jaffna district political head of the LTTE said that his organization had not taken any decision regarding the forthcoming presidential poll. "LTTE will not exert any pressure on Tamils on this issue," said Mr. Ilamparithi answering a question at a press briefing held in Jaffna district political office, which is, now located in LTTE controlled Pallai area.

"The decision to boycott or to vote at the presidential election has been left in the hands of Tamil people. Many Tamils may decide to boycott the presidential poll taking into consideration the past traitorous activities of Sri Lankan politicians in the south. We will not interfere in their decision. However we will be vigilant during the election period," said Mr. Ilamparithi. He recalled the statement by LTTE political head Mr. S. P. Thamilchelvan that the decision taken by Tamil people would be the final one. Mr. Thamilchelvan's statement still stands, Mr. Ilamparithi said.

Muslim businessman shot in Valaichenai: Nov 5 - A Muslim businessman, Mr. M. S. Mohamed Puhari, 38, was shot and wounded Friday (5) night at Mavadichenai in Valaichenai by unidentified gunmen, Valaichenai police said. The victim was rushed to Valaichenai hospital and later transferred to Batticaloa hospital. Mohamed Puhari is from Semmanodai in Valaichenai, 32 km north of Batticaloa.

Youth shot dead in Trincomalee: Nov 5 - Unidentified men Saturday (5) night around 8.30 pm shot dead a Tamil youth identified as Thuraiarajah Kannan in front of a leading jewellery shop along Dockyard Road in Trincomalee town. The site where the incident took place is located a few meters from the main entrance to the eastern headquarters of the Sri Lanka Navy (SLN). LTTE sources described he murdered youth as an informant of the Sri

Lanka security forces. They said that he was earlier in the LTTE and later left the movement. He was shot while riding his scooter, police sources said accusing the Tigers of carrying out the murder.

Tamil businessman shot in Puttalam: Nov 6 - Two unidentified gunmen entered a jewellery shop located on Puttalam Mannar Road in Puttalam town Sunday (6) at 9:30 am and shot the shop owner. The victim, Mr. K. Pathmalingam, 39, was wounded and rushed to Puttalam hospital, police said. The gunmen were riding in a motor-bike.

Jaffna postal vote boycott urged: Nov 6 - An organisation calling itself as the "Tamil Government Clerical Services Association" has made a public call for all Government workers in Jaffna district who are eligible for postal votes for the forthcoming Sri Lanka presidential elections, to boycott the vote in unison, in a media release issued in Jaffna. "Both presidential candidates are focussed on becoming the supreme commander of the Sri Lanka Security Forces to continue suppression of Tamil people. Neither is interested in finding an amicable solution to the burning Tamil National question," the statement said of candidates' intentions. In this political climate, it is critical that Tamil people express their feeling clearly to the International Community which is keenly observing the outcome of the elections.

"While the general public in Jaffna district and all across NorthEast have resolved to boycott the elections, the Government workers too should join with them to express their wholehearted agreement with the peoples stand in boycotting the poll," the media statement said.

Bus-depot official shot dead: Nov 6 - Unidentified gunmen shot and killed Mr. Thasaputhiran Thasakumar, 33, a staff worker attached to Sammanthurai bus depot of the Sri Lanka Transport Board (CTB), at his residence in Akkaraipattu, 64 km south of Batticaloa. The incident took place Sunday (6) at 7:30 p.m., Akkaraipattu. The motor-bike-riding gunmen had come to his residence on Kali Temple Road at Alaiyadivembu in Akkaraipattu. The gunmen had used 9 mm pistol and shot the victim thrice, Akkaraipattu Police Officer-In-Charge (OIC) Mr. Sorriyarachy said blaming the Tigers for the killing.

3 youths abducted in Batticaloa: Nov 6 - Unidentified armed men believed kidnapped three youths at gunpoint Saturday (5) night in Kaluwankerny in Eravur. Complaint lodged by parents of the kidnapped youths at the Eravur Police said that the kidnappers had come in a white van. At least five youths have been reported disappeared last week in the Batticaloa district. Mr. Uthayan Selvarajah, 25, Mr. Subramaniam Kanapathipillai, 32, and Mr. S. Leethan, 31, were the youths kidnapped. Eravur is located 12 km north of Batticaloa town.

Muslim businessman shot: Nov 8 - Mr. Sinnathamby Puhari, 26, a Muslim owner of a business was shot and

wounded in Monday (7) night at his residence in Eravur by unidentified gunmen. Mr. Puhari was shot when he returned home after talking to his friends at Meerakerny in Eravur at 8:30 p.m. The gunmen had used a T-56 rifle, according to the Police. The victim, who is married and has a child, was admitted to Batticaloa Hospital. Eravur is located 15 km north of Batticaloa town.

Two shot in Eravur: Nov 10 - An unidentified assailant shot and wounded two masons, Mr. Ganeshamoorthy Chandrakumar, 20, and Mr. Navaratnarajah Kannan, 24, in Vantharumoolai in Eravur, 18 km north of Batticaloa. The incident took place around 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday (9). Chandrakumar was talking to his neighbour and co-worker Kannan when the assailant entered his house. The gunman fled from the scene in a motorbike after firing gunshots at them. The wounded persons were rushed to Batticaloa Hospital.

Grenade lobbed at TNA MP's Lodge: Nov 10 - Unidentified attackers lobbed a grenade into the premises of the lodge owned by Jaffna Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP Mr. Suresh Premachandran at 4:30 a.m. Thursday (10). The lodge is located in Kattaipirai on Jaffna Point Pedro Road. No one was injured in the incident. Neighbours in the area said that they heard the sound of a speeding motorbike following the grenade explosion.

Suresh Premachandran's main office is located in Jaffna and he does not use the lodge except on special occasions, sources added. The MP had left for Kilinochchi with fellow TNA MPs for a crucial conference with Liberation Tigers Political Wing.

Policeman shot dead in Jaffna: Nov 11 - A policeman, Mr. Senanayake, 38, wounded in gunfire by unidentified gunmen at Thirunelveli market in Jaffna around 4:00 p.m. Friday (11), succumbed to his wounds at Jaffna Hospital, medical sources said. Gunmen riding in a motorbike had fired at a group of policemen who had arrived at Thirunelveli market junction in Jaffna town from Atchchuvelli, Jaffna Police said blaming the Tamil Tigers for the killing.

Two LTTE suspects escape jail: Nov 11 - Two suspects alleged to be members of Liberation Tigers kept in remand in Jaffna jail escaped with two accomplices who entered the jail posing as spectators and threatened prison officials with hand guns at 4.30 p.m. Friday (11), TamilNet said quoting security sources in Jaffna. The four escaped in motorbikes along Columbuthurai Road. One of the men who escaped was arrested earlier at Vadamaradchy seas in a boat and the other escapee was earlier caught near Palaly in the High Security Zone (HSZ), suspected of gathering intelligence for the LTTE. Both were awaiting trials in Point Pedro and Mallakam Courts.

Two killed, four wounded in mine attack: Nov 12 - A Claymore mine exploded Friday (11) midnight at Kirimichchai in Vaharai, 44 km north of Batticaloa, killing

two Muslim timber workers, Mr. Mohammed Munas, 28, and Mr. Athambava Mohammed Lebbe, 35. Four persons were rushed to Batticaloa Hospital with wounds, Police said. The crew that had gone to the jungle area to cut timber three days earlier, was returning from Kirimichchai to Valaichenai through the Welikanda area in a tractor with timber at the time of the attack. Mr. Meerasaivu Muzamil, 22, Mr. Athambava Nazeer, 37, Mr. Muhammed Abdul Raheem, 28, and Mr. Mohammed Meerathamby, 28, were the workers wounded in the incident.

The claymore blast took place around 00:30 a.m. Saturday on a lane circumventing the Panichankerni Sri Lanka Army (SLA) camp which is located on Vaharai Valaichenai main road. Tension prevailed in Valaichenai, the home town of the Muslim victims, following the incident that took place 17 km north of Valaichenai.

Soldier shot, gunmen seize weapons: Nov 12 - Two motorbike-riding assailants shot and wounded a Sri Lanka Army soldier at a checkpoint located in Ganeshapuram, 6 km northwest of Vavuniya town, around 1:30 p.m. Saturday (12). The assailants, who seized two AK-47 rifles from the soldiers, fled away in their motorbike, Vavuniya Police said blaming the Tamil Tigers for the attack.

Govt officials urged to boycott election duty: Nov 13 - An organization called "Peoples Force" in Jaffna district called all Tamil public servants to ignore election duty on the presidential poll scheduled to be held on November 17 and to observe the day as mourning. Boycott posters are seen in public places throughout the Jaffna district. Sinhala political parties are not sincere in addressing the Tamil national question meeting the legitimate aspirations of Tamil people. Tamils should show to the international community and Sinhala leaders of the south that they are not interested in the forthcoming presidential election. It is the duty of Tamil people and Tamil public servants to boycott the presidential poll, the appeal said.

Tamil Students Consortium in the districts of Trincomalee and Amparai in the east have also appealed to Tamil people to boycott the presidential poll to demonstrate that they are not interested in the power struggle between the Sinhala political leadership in the south.

EPDP member shot dead in Colombo: Nov 13 - Two unknown gunmen riding in a motorbike shot dead Mr. Vellaipodi Rasanayagam (36), an Eelam People Democratic Party (EPDP) official, Sunday (13) night at about 8.00 p.m. at Maya Avenue in Wellawatte, Colombo. The victim, originally from Trincomalee, was married man with month-old infant. The EPDP accused the LTTE pistol gang of carrying out the killing.

Suspects charged in explosives case: Nov 14 - Mr. A.S. Johnthasan, Mannar acting Magistrate, ordered further remand till November 21 of the three suspects arrested in connection with alleged possession of explosives. The suspects, Francis Joseph of Talaimannar, Raja

Palani of Kayts and A. Vasanthakumar of Mannar, were brought to Mannar courts under heavy guard from Anuradhapura Prison. Talaimannar Police arrested the first suspect on 31st October allegedly with about 1500 gelignite sticks. After interrogation the Police arrested two other suspects. When the suspects were produced in court on Monday (14), the Police filed plaint against them for possessing explosives under the Dangerous Weapons Act and moved for further remand.

Two LTTE cadres shot dead: Nov 15 - Unidentified gunmen shot and killed two cadres of the LTTE on Monday (14) night in Pallikudiyiruppu, a Muslim suburb in Sri Lanka Army controlled Akkaraipattu in Amparai district, TamilNet reported. The cadres, Mr. Suresh, 26, and Mr. Vellai, 22, who used to come to the village to purchase meat, were reportedly kidnapped by the gunmen.

EPDP cadre shot, injured in Kayts: Nov 15 - N Kumaran (31), reportedly a senior member of the Eelam Peoples Democratic Front (EPDP) sustained severe injuries to his head when suspected LTTE gunmen fired at him and his fellow cadres while they were distributing propaganda leaflets in support of Sri Lanka presidential contestant, Mahinda Rajapakse, in Kayts, Jaffna, at 1.30 p.m. Tuesday (15). He has been admitted to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital, medical sources said. The incident happened near the EPDP offices by the Little flower school in Kayts.

Body recovered from Temple well: Nov 15 - Partially clothed body of a man around 40 years old was found in a well at the premises of Chuttipuram Amman Kovil in Varani, Jaffna along the Kodikamam-Point Pedro road, sources in Jaffna said. The yet unidentified body was recovered by Kodikamam Police and has been transferred to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital for postmortem examinations. Sri Lanka Army (SLA) 52-4 Brigade Head quarters is located in the same area.

Two shot dead in Valaichenai: Nov 16 - Unidentified assailants shot and killed two Tamil youths at Palainagar Junction on Batticaloa Polannaruwa road, 5 km north of Valaichenai Wednesday (16) morning at 4:00 a.m. The victims were reportedly LTTE cadres. One of the victims was identified as Mr. S. Suresh, 28 and the other as M. Kanthan. The bodies of the two victims with their hands tied to their backs found near Methodist Church, Navakudah, were handed over to Valaichenai Hospital by the Sri Lankan Police. Police believe that the killings were carried out by Karuna loyalists.

Sinhalese person shot dead: Nov 16 - Unidentified men shot dead a Sinhalese person in Palaiyootru, a suburb in the Trincomalee town, and the Uppuveli Police Tuesday (15) night recovered the body in the shrub jungle in the area. The body was taken to the mortuary of the Trincomalee general hospital for identification and inquest, police said. According to preliminary investigation, the victim had been shot around Tuesday afternoon and the police received information in the evening,

sources said.

TRO office in Batticaloa attacked: Nov 16 - Two unidentified assailants lobbed grenades at the Batticaloa office of the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) Wednesday (16) morning around 6:15 a.m., causing damage to the computer section of the TRO office, three tractors and a bus parked outside the office, Batticaloa Police said. The Batticaloa office of the TRO located within 100 meters from two Sri Lanka Army sentries, has been the target of unidentified attackers for the third time this year, TamilNet reported.

No change in LTTE position on polls: Nov 16 - The Liberation Tigers said Wednesday (16) that there was no change in their position on the Presidential election from that taken on Friday (11). Denying newspaper reports that the LTTE was now actively encouraging people to vote in the Presidential elections, head of the LTTE's Peace Secretariat, S. Pulidevan, said "the issue was discussed at length by the LTTE and the TNA (Tamil National Alliance) last week and the conclusion was the Tamils cannot place our trust on either of the parties or their candidates."

A Daily Mirror newspaper said the LTTE "has reportedly decided" to fully encourage the people of the north and east (to vote)." Mr. Pulidevan dismissed the report as "unfounded" and "erroneous." "Our leadership came to a firm decision on this matter last Friday after extensive discussions and the LTTE's position has not changed since then," he told TamilNet. Meanwhile, the TNA also dismissed the report which hit the newsstands this morning.

Mr. R. Sampanthan, TNA parliamentary group leader Wednesday afternoon issued a press release in this regard. The full text of the press release follows: "Our attention has been drawn to various contradictory reports that have appeared in the Media regarding the position of the Tamil people in the North East at the impending Presidential Election. The position of the Tamil National Alliance (Ilankai Thamilarasu Kadchchi) was clearly enunciated to the Media at the conclusion of the meeting with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) at Killinochchi on Thursday 10th November 2005. There is no change in the position made absolutely clear to the Media on 10th November pertaining to the Tamil people in the North-East."

Ex-TELO cadre shot dead: Nov 16 - Unidentified gunmen riding in a van kidnapped Mr. Rajmohan Seenithamby, 38, at 1:00 p.m. Wednesday (16), Police said. The victim was found shot dead two hours later at a road junction on Punanai School Road. The victim was forced into the van while he was on his way to visit his mother in Pethalai Kannan village. The incident took place in Valaichenai, 32 km north of Batticaloa.

Home guards shot, one dead, one wounded: Nov 16 - Unidentified gunmen shot two home guards killing one and

wounding the other in Sorivil Wednesday (16) morning around 9:00 a.m., Aralaganwila police said. Sorivil, located 70 km northwest of Batticaloa and 8 km from Mannampitiya, is an interior village in the Polannaruwa district along the Batticaloa-Polannaruwa road. The gunmen had used a T-56 rifle to gun down Mr. Sunantha Pathmakumar, 27. The wounded home guard, Mr. W. Premathilake, 23, was admitted at Polannaruwa Hospital, Police said blaming the LTTE for the attack.

Two Muslim businessmen shot, one dead: Nov 16 - Unidentified gunmen shot and killed a Muslim businessman, Mr. Ahammad Lebbe Thaheer, 42, Wednesday (16) around 7:30 p.m. at Natpittymunai in Kalmunai, north of Amparai town. Another Muslim businessman, shot and wounded in a separate incident at 8:15 p.m. in Maruthamunai in Kalmunai, was rushed to Kalmunai Ashraff Memorial Hospital, Police said. Mr. Ahammad Lebbe Thaheer was standing in front of his residence on Kiddanki Road when he was shot and killed by two unidentified gunmen who were riding in a motorbike. Kalmunai is located 39 km south of Batticaloa.

3 soldiers, policemen wounded in grenade attacks: Nov 16 - Three Sri Lanka Army soldiers were rushed to Batticaloa Hospital with serious injuries following a grenade attack on them in Iruthayapuram 2 km north of Batticaloa town at 8:10 p.m. Wednesday (16), police said accusing the Tamil Tigers for the attack. At least two policeman were wounded in a separate grenade attack in Manmunai, 7 km south of Batticaloa. The SLA soldiers injured in the grenade attack in Iruthayapuram, W.G.K Chandrasena, 20, Monoj Indika, 20, P.S.P Pathirana, 20, were attached to Kallady SLA camp. The wounded policemen were also rushed to Batticaloa Hospital, police said adding that there could be more than two policemen injured in the incident.

Two youths arrested: Nov 16 - Eravur police arrested two Tamil youths for allegedly tossing a grenade into their police vehicle Wednesday (16) evening in Palayadithona near Santhiveli in Eravur around 5:30 p.m. Police said that the grenade lobbed at their vehicle did not explode. The youths were riding in push bikes when they were arrested by the police. Mr. Perinparajah Mathivathanan, 19, and Thambivelu Sasikumar, 23, were the youths arrested by the Eravur Police. The youths were remanded for inquiries at Eravur Police station, police said.

More grenade attacks: Nov 16 - A grenade attack was reported in Batticaloa at Koolavady junction on Boundary Road Wednesday (16) night around 8:15 p.m. A Sri Lanka Army soldier and a policeman were wounded in the incident, police said. Another blast was reported in Chenkalady, Eravur around 9:15 p.m. Casualty details from Eravur incident were not available at the moment. Tension prevailed in Batticaloa and Amparai districts. The wounded SLA soldier in the Koolavady blast, Saman Nalintha, 20, and the police constable, G.C.D. Jeyaratne,

were rushed to Batticaloa Hospital, police said.

Sinhala trader shot dead: Nov 17 - Unidentified gunmen shot dead a 40 year old Sinhala trader known as "Baby" Thursday (17) afternoon 4 p.m. at Chelvanayakapuram area, a suburb located three km off Trincomalee town. The victim was shot while he was riding a motorbike, Uppuveli Police said. Members of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) in Trincomalee who were returning to their office through Chelvanayakapuram got down at the site and saw the body of the victim lying on the road with his motorbike aside.

Bakery bomb kills two, injures six: Nov 17 - At least two suspected LTTE cadres were killed and six injured when a bomb exploded inside a bakery at Pandirippu in Kalmunai 17 November, military sources said. They said at about 1.45 pm two LTTE suspects, identified as Niroshan and Sathyan had forcibly entered a bakery of a Tamil businessman and were engaged in making a bomb. However the bomb had accidentally exploded killing the two cadres on the spot and injuring the family of the Tamil businessman. Among those injured were five children. The children, Piriya 8, Vithushya 9, Rangan 9, Chandran 18, including two-year old Mathushan, were rushed to Kalmunai Hospital, Police said.

Policeman injured in attack: Nov 18 - Unknown assailant waiting outside the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP) offices in Manthikai, 2 km south of Point Pedro, fired at two persons in civilian clothes when they came out of the office premises at 10.50 a.m. Friday (18). Unconfirmed reports said that one Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldier dressed in civilian clothes was killed in the attack. Palaly military spokesman denied that the dead man was an SLA trooper. The other, a Sri Lanka Police officer, was injured in the attack and has been admitted to the Base Hospital in Point Pedro. He is receiving treatment for gunshot injuries amid strengthened security. The EPDP and security forces attributed the attack on the Tigers.

EU monitors withdrawn from Valaichchenai and Chenkaladi: Nov 18 - European Union (EU), monitoring missions, fearing for the safety of their members, withdrew from Valaichchenai and Chenkalady after two separate bombing incidents on polling day, 17 November, at Valaichchenai Hindu College and at a polling booth in Chenkaladi.

EU Election Observation Mission chief, John Cushman told the media that their priority was to ensure the personal security of its monitors. "The teams have been withdrawn to a more secure location and are awaiting further instructions," he said.

The grenade attack occurred at Valaichchenai Hindu College, Batticaloa, at 11.45 a.m., injuring 4 civilians and 2 policemen. The injured, were admitted to the Valaichchenai hospital. The assailants had arrived on a motorcycle. Police reported that polling recommenced within 45 minutes

(continued on page 41)

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on the seventeenth anniversary

of his passing away on 16th November 1988.

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Sixth Year Remembrance



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For yesterday and you.

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We know because we've tried;
And neither will a million tears,
We know because we've cried.

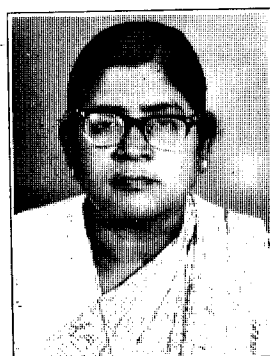
You left behind our broken hearts,
And happy memories too;
We never wanted memories,
We only wanted you.

Love for ever
Mum & Dad

Memories are something no one can steal,
Death is a heartache no one can heal
Some may forget you now you are gone,
We will remember and love you, no matter how long.

Love you always
Rajeev Aiya and Saloni.

Seventh Year Remembrance



In ever loving memory of **Miss. Daisy Selvaranee** on the seventh anniversary of her passing away on 10th November 1998.

**" Nothing loved is ever lost
Memories last for ever"**

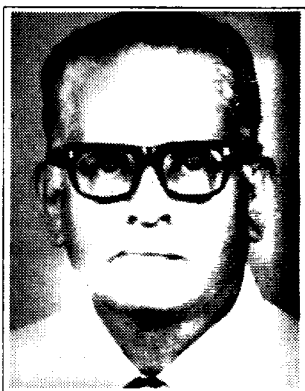
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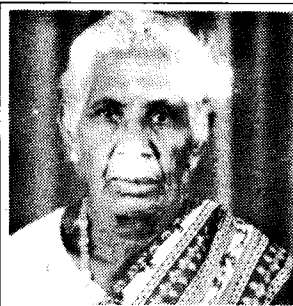
Thanking the Lord for the testimony of your life is all we do, as we treasure your memories over the past 15 years.

Fondly remembered and sadly missed;

Ranee and Children: Ranjan, Seelan, Shanthi, Jeyanthi & families.

Fourth Year Remembrance

In ever loving memory of **Mrs Pavalam Ramasamy** who passed away on 29th November 2001.



*Dear Amma,
Everyone says that you left us, but to us you continue to live with us everyday. Sadly missed and fondly remembered by your loving children, in-laws, and grandchildren*

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Mrs Chandra Ragupathy



In ever loving memory of my wife Chandra on the tenth anniversary of her passing away on 28th November 1995.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered always by her loving husband Ragupathy.

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Forthcoming Events

December 2005

- 1 Amavasai
- 3 Feast of St. Francis Xavier
- 4 Sathurthi
- 5 Sarvalaya Deepam; Karthigai Somavaran (3)
- 6 Shashti
- 7 Feast of St. Ambrose
- 8 Feast of The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 11 Eekathasi
- 12 Karthigai Somavaram (4)
- 13 Karthigai; Pirathosam
- 14 Feast of St. John of the Cross
- 15 Full Moon
- 16 Sri Vinayagar Viratham starts
- 19 Sankadakara Sathurthi
- 21 Feast of St. Peter Canisius
- 23 Feast of St. Kinty
- 25 Christmas Day
- 26 Feast of St. Stephen (Boxing Day)
- 27. Eekathasi

- 28 Pirathosam
- 30 Amavasai
- 31 Feast of St. Sylvester

Wedding Bells

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Vathany, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Vijayaratna and **Chrishan**, son of Dr. and Mrs. P.A. Neelaranjitha Rajah on 10th September 2005 at the Grand Ballroom of the Hilton on Park Lane, London W1.

Jeyaganeshan, son of Mr. A.S. Ganeshavel and Mrs. Sarojini Ganeshavel of Uyarapulam, Anaicoddai, and **Vaanathy**, daughter of Mr. T. Pulanthiran and Mrs. Sarveswary Pulenthiran of 'Selvapavanam', New Road, Kokuvil West, Kokuvil on 12th November 2005 at Sri Pararaja Segara Pillayar Kalyana Mandapam, Inuvil.

Sri Lanka Railway Past Employees Welfare Association, UK

The following were elected office-bearers of the association at the 10th Annual General Meeting held on 4th June 2005

Patron:

Mr. A. Manikkam;

President:

Mr. S. Ponnudurai;

Vice-President:

Mr. P. Gnananathan;

Hony. Secretary:

P. Chellathurai;

Asst. Secretary:

Mr. V. J. Constantine;

Hony. Treasurer:

Mr. K. Paramanathan;

Editor: Mr. M. Balasundram;

Committee:

Mr. N. S. Thambyrajah,

Mr. M. Selvanayagam,

Dr. A. Visagaratnam,

Mrs. P. Arulampalam &

Mrs. Ida Patrick;

Auditor:

E. Soundranayagam.

The association will be celebrating their 10th anniversary and X'mas party on 10th December 2005 at Squadron Air Training Corp Hall, 192 Merton Road, Wimbledon from 11 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

There will be Carols, Carnatic Music, Bharatha Natyam Dance, honouring two members who initiated the formation of our association, releasing the Journal on the occasion of the 10th anniversary, Tombola game (Bingo), Raffle, Musical Chairs and handing over presents to children by Santa Claus, etc.

P. Chellathurai
Hony. Secretary.



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AUSTRALIAN NEWSLETTER

Australia is steering the biggest drive in the recent history to attract migrants as part of the solution to address the overall skill shortage in the country and grand expos are being held across the globe in four major centres including one in Chennai. Yet, Australia has sizable number of asylum seekers including several Tamils and some even with specialised skills, whose asylum applications have been unresolved for many years. Undoubtedly, Australia possesses the most deplorable onshore refugee policy and some elements are even described as inhuman when compared to other industrialised nations.

It is heartening that there are several events being organised in many parts of Australia to promote Tamil art and culture among the younger generation and in that regard metropolitan Melbourne recently witnessed three major

"speech, song and art/drawing" competitions. First was the drawing competition organised under the auspicious of Solai Sirruvar Foundation, then it was Victoria's Eelam Tamil Association's annual Muthamil Vizha Tamil speech and song competition and finally it was Melbourne Tamil Sangam's speech and song competition to commemorate the centenary of Thirumuruga Kirubanantha Varriyar.

Australia's Liberal government is spearheading a 100 million dollar campaign to promote its Industrial Reforms which would deregulate and simplify workplace cultures and make Prime Minister Howard's long term dream of 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year economy a reality. New reforms are seen as a likely challenge to unfair dismissal laws, rigid minimum wage structure etc. which some argue

as a system designed for twentieth century piece-workers and not for professionals. Prime Minister Howard claims that "Job security is built on a strong economy and a strong economy depends crucially on the right industrial relations policy", while Opposition Leader Kim Beazley called on the government to "back off" and shred the reforms because "these industrial relations changes will be ruinous of lives for many families". Community at large is particularly concerned with the proposed changes and none other than the Sydney Anglican Archbishop Peter Jensen spelt it when he said that the new laws would cut into family time.

Australian Tamil environs are somewhat unique being the launch pad for many Tamil books in a non-Tamil speaking land and the latest being a book titled "Therippu", which is a collection of political and social writings that was ceremoniously released amidst a grand gathering in Melbourne recently.

Sivasupramaniam Sitsabesan

Perth Hindu Temple Maha Kumbhabhishekam



The grand consecration of the new Perth Hindu temple took place on the 8th September 2005 in Western Australia.

The ceremonies were conducted by Shri Parameswara Kurukkal (Malaysia) in the presence of Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami (Hawaii), with the assistance of priests from overseas (Srilanka, India, Malaysia) and interstate (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane). The consecration ceremony sequence commenced with the Ganesha Hawan at 5:30 am on 13 July 2005 and continued daily with the Yantra Pooja for 48 days. This was followed by, Placing of Precious stones, Application of Oil on the Icons, Maha Kumbhabhishekam, Shiva - Parvati Wedding, Vishnu - Lakshmi Wedding on 9th September. The central shrines of Shiva, Devi and Ganesha are universal to all Hindus all over the world. The tem-

ple also has shrines for Vishnu, Lakshmi, Murugan and Hanuman.

The outstanding architecture of the temple is the work of a dedicated team of local and overseas devotees. The architecture drawings were done by the famous architect Mr V S Thuraiarajah at no cost to the temple. The land for the

temple site was purchased on 10th August 1986. Swami Shantananda consecrated the land in a ceremony in 1987. Construction of the multi purpose hall commenced in March 1989. The foundation ceremony for the new temple was held on 10th April 1998. Artisans from India led by Stapathi, Devakottai S. Nagarajan, who commenced detailed work in August 2002, have made an immense contribution to the intricate sculptural work on shrine domes, on pillars and temple walls. Indeed it is a building which will create its place in the History of Western Australia. The architecture includes influence from North India (Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan), Western India (Gujarat), South India (Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Kerala) and Sri Lanka.

Acknowledging the fact that the Hin-

dus in WA come from different countries and regions, our new temple is an outstanding example of multiculturalism within the Hindus. The South side Gopuram (or entrance door) and all the icons in the South side of the temple including Vishnu, Lakshmi and Hanuman are in the North Indian pattern. The sculptures on the wall Ram Parivar, Vishnu, Sri Krishna and Ganesha are in the North Indian and Gujrati pattern. The North side Gopuram is in Gujrati pattern. The North side icons, Kartikeya, Vasanta Mandapam, Utsava Mandapam and sculptures on the wall are in the South Indian and Sri Lankan pattern. The Perth Hindu Temple is thus an absolutely unique structure with no other temple in the world with similar characteristics.

Over 2000 people attended the momentous Maha Kumbhabhishekam ceremony. The invited guests, included West Australian Attorney General and Minister for Health, Hon. Jim McGinty who represented the Premier, local legislative assembly members and dignitaries.

Temple opening hours: 6.00am till 11.00am and 5.00 p.m. till 8.30 p.m. daily

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Book Review

TAMIL TRADE & CULTURAL EXCHANGE

The Tamils, on either side of the Palk Strait, have had a long maritime tradition. And they formed one trading orbit over the ancient and medieval periods until the arrival of the Europeans. This book seeks to chart that history of the maritime and commercial enterprise of the Tamils from the very beginning. It goes on to show that Tamil civilization dates back 11,000 years beginning with the long lost continent of Kumari Kandam. At that time, the Sri Lanka of today was an integral part of South India,

known as the province of Ma-Illankai in Tamil.

The maritime and commercial enterprise of the Tamils thereafter is traced through the rise and fall of the Tamil kingdoms of Tamilakam in South India and of north-western Ilankai. At every opportunity, the historical evidence, based on archaeological, inscriptional and literary sources is supported with corroborative evidence from foreign sources. Equally as important in this fascinating account is the evidence that

the trading activities of the Tamils also provided a passage for cultural exchange especially in South East Asia and the Far East. The assimilation of Tamil culture is there to see in those countries even today.

The author has devoted his time, in retirement, to write on aspects of the history of the Tamils. His two previous books are "Early Tamils of Lanka=Ilankai" and "Medieval Tamils in Lanka=Ilankai". This book (170 pages) is priced at Pounds Sterling 10.00 (plus postage) and can be purchased by calling 020 8520 5442 (UK).

N. Parameswaran

(continued from page 37)

of the attack. The second incident was 45 minutes later, at a polling booth in Chenkaladi, in the Batticaloa district. One PC and 2 civilians were injured in the incident.

Grenade attack on SLA sentry: Nov 19 - Sri Lanka Army (SLA) sentry point, serving as the gateway to Hartley College and Methodist Girls High School located within the Point Pedro High Security Zone (HSZ), came under grenade attack at 7 p.m. Saturday (19) TamilNet reported. Gunmen riding a motorbike lobbed the grenade and escaped via the Hostel Road. Point Pedro SLA declined to disclose the damages to the sentry. Residents said gunmen came along College road towards the sentry and escaped along Hostel road adjoining the Hartley College playgrounds and the destroyed buildings of the school's old Hostel building.

Muslim couple shot dead in Valaichenai: Nov 20 - Unidentified gunmen shot and killed Mr. Meerasaivu Ahammed Lebbe, 44, and his wife Fowziya Lebbaitnamby, 43, Sunday (20) morning at 1:30 a.m. in Miravodai, a Muslim village 28 km northwest of Batticaloa. Mr. Ahammad Lebbe, a Middle-East employment agent and a supporter of the United National Party, died on the spot at his house. Mrs. Lebbethamby Fowzia succumbed to her injuries at Batticaloa Hospital. The incident took place at the couple's house on Madeena Road. The couple was asleep when the assailants entered the house and shot the victims with T-56 rifle. Valaichenai Police said who alleged that the couple had been targeted by the Tigers for having declined to pay a big sum of money.

Woman's body found near temple: Nov 20 - Unidentified body of a young woman, estimated to be around 25 years,

was found inside an abandoned building 200 meters from the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) checkpoint along the Point-Pedro Nagarkovil road near the Vallipuram Vishnu temple, sources from Jaffna said. The building where the body was found formerly belonged to the Palmyrah Development Board. Point Pedro police recovered the body around 5.30 pm and has transported the body to Point Pedro Government Hospital in Manthikai for postmortem examination.

Two SLN soldiers abducted: Nov 21 - Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) soldiers have cordoned off Nedunthivu (Delft) and are conducting house to house search after two SLN soldiers were reported missing allegedly abducted by unknown men. Delft islet is under the control of the Sri Lanka Navy. All transport to and from Nedunthivu islet has been suspended and the SLN said that until they find the whereabouts of the abducted soldiers, the transport would not be resumed.

Youth sustains gunshot wounds: Nov 21 - Mr. Kandasamy Thavakumar, 34, employed in Cholan Vanipam, a Kilnochchi based business network, was shot allegedly by a Sri Lankan Intelligence operative from a hidden location in Thirunelvely, 4 km east of Jaffna town Monday (21) at 5:30 p.m., TamilNet reported. However, Police Officer-In-Charge in Kopay, Mr. Sri Selvam had said the youth was wounded when a gun belonging to a policeman riding in a Jeep accidentally went off, the report added. Mr. Thavakumar was wounded by gunshots from a T-56 type of rifle. Thavakumar, who sustained wounds in his chest and face, was rushed to Jaffna Hospital. The incident reportedly took place on Adiyapatham veethy when he was seated in a van unloading rice to a shop.

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