

Tamil TIMES

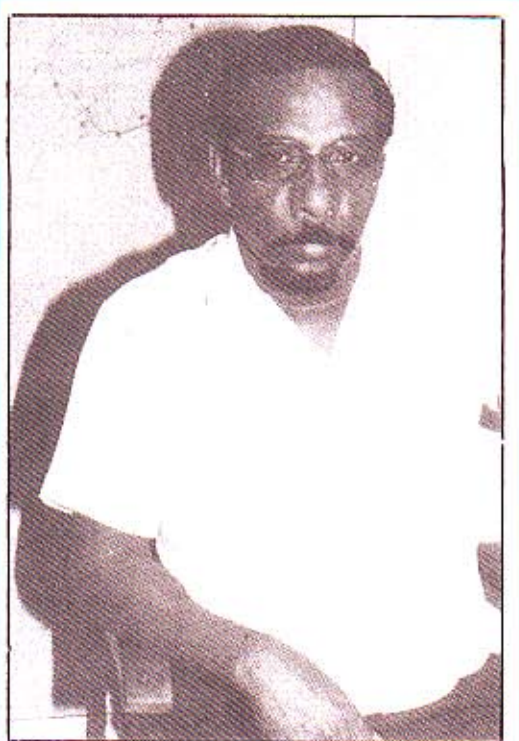
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Govt. Unveils Political Package

'The LTTE was never against a peace settlement... Whether it is peace or war, we are ready for both. If the government halts its military operations and creates the necessary atmosphere for peace by showing concern for the day to day living needs of the Tamil people, we are yet prepared for political negotiations. If on the other hand, the government tries to shut the doors against peace for all time, ... we will have no option but to... set about carving out our own state in which our people can live in peace and dignity.'



LTTE Spokesman, Anton Balasingham



President Chandrika Kumaratunga

'...during the 50 years since the end of the colonial era, the aspirations of the Tamil people were not adequately fulfilled... The first task is, therefore, a new approach predicated on unqualified acceptance of the fact that the Tamil people have genuine grievances for which solutions must be found... We have a vision of Sri Lanka where all communities can live in safety and security where human dignity is valued, and equality of treatment is an accepted norm of public life.'



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I do not agree with a word
of what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it.
- Voltaire.

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The Political Package

Looking at the reactions from the more important capitals of the world to the political package for the resolution of the ethnic conflict unveiled recently by the Government of Sri Lanka, one cannot fail to appreciate that it has been universally welcomed as a commendable and courageous effort.

In substance, what has been offered through this package is a fundamental and radical constitutional reorganisation of the Sri Lankan polity and the unitary structure into a model federal system based on a well defined scheme of power sharing. Sri Lanka is no longer to be a unitary State and is to become a Union of Regions. The package envisages a substantial divesting of power from the Centre to eight Regions, one of which is to be the merged Northeast Region.

The subjects and functions of the State are to be shared between the Centre and the Regions on the basis of a well defined and delineated Regional List and a Reserved List. The Centre is to have no power of interference over the subjects and functions designated in the Regional List.

The executive power hitherto vested in an all powerful Executive President is to be shared between the Centre and the Regions, the President acting on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers, and at the regional level by the Governors acting on the advice of the Chief Minister and Board of Ministers. The Regional Council will have exclusive legislative power over all of its specified subjects and functions untrammelled by interference from the Centre. There is to be a Regional Public Service with a Public Service Commission, a Regional Judiciary with a High Court and inferior courts with a Judicial Service Commission, a Regional Attorney General, a Regional Police Service with an IGP appointed by and accountable to the Chief Minister of the Region. All State land is to be vested in the Regional Council. Powers of Regional Councils to raise taxes and other forms of income will include the power to negotiate directly foreign investment, international grants and loans and development assistance.

There is no doubt that the constitutional dispensation offered by the government's proposals provide a constitutional instrument for effective sharing of State power, legislative, executive and judicial. By any standard of analysis or comparison, it not only represents a substantial advance on all previous ill-fated proposals made by previous governments, but also satisfies the tests of a reasonable advanced federal system

In proposing the political package with such wide-ranging political structural and constitutional implications, one must recognise that President Kumaratunga and her government have taken grave political risks. That must be self evident from previous attempts to resolve the ethnic crisis thrown off course by orchestrated opposition, and the opposition that is now sought to be mounted at the instigation of chauvinists in the south against the government's proposals.

In this context, there is a special responsibility that falls on the main players in the ongoing war, the government and the LTTE. The Peoples Alliance Government was elected on a promise to bring about peace. It did not have a mandate to continue the war.

On the other hand it may be well to recall that the LTTE has very often stated that they would consider a political package presented by the government that would meet the aspirations of the Tamil people as an alternative to their demand for a separate state, and let the Tamil people decide. The government has now presented its alternative package. It is now the turn of the LTTE and the Tamil people to respond, and respond positively. Let history not record that another viable chance for the peaceful resolution of the conflict was missed by the failure on the Tamil side.

It is futile now to go into the question as to why there was a resumption of hostilities between the LTTE and government forces and to apportion blame. The opportunity of the publication of the government's proposals presents an ideal chance for both parties to get back to the negotiating table. The government would not lose anything by sending its proposals to the LTTE and asking for their views. And the LTTE could in turn offer a cessation of hostilities and seek negotiations on the political package with the government.

Govt's Political Package For Solving Ethnic Conflict

PREAMBLE

The government, in its policy statement on June 6th 1995 stated that:

'Our Government is committed to a peaceful resolution of the ethnic conflict. We have a vision of Sri Lanka where all communities can live in safety and security, where human dignity is valued and equality of treatment is an accepted norm of public life. We believe that all communities must be given the space to express their identity, and participate fully in the life of the nation, whether it be at the national, provincial or local level. . .

'With these objectives in view the government is seeking to re-build the constitutional foundations of a multi-ethnic, plural society based on the following principles:

- a) promoting a vision of Sri Lanka where all communities can live in safety and security and their human dignity is valued and equality of treatment is an accepted norm of public life;
- b) ensuring that all communities be given the space to express their distinct identity and promote that identity including the right to enjoy their own culture, profess and practice their own religion, and nurture and promote their own language including the right to transact business with the state in the national language of their choice;
- c) ensuring that all persons may fully and effectively exercise all their human rights and fundamental freedoms without any distinction and in full equality before the law;
- d) giving recognition to Sinhala and Tamil as official languages and recognising English as a link language;
- e) providing an effective constitutional framework for the sharing of power with the regions based on an internally consistent and coherent value system. There would be clarity and consistency in the distribution of power between the centre and the regions and the scheme would be one which is capable of effective implementation and include structures for the just and equitable resolution of centre region disputes;
- f) ensuring that all communities participate fully in the life of the

nation whether it be at national, regional or local level, thereby encouraging the regions and the communities which inhabit them to become constructive partners in a stable and pluralistic democracy.

1. STRUCTURE OF DEVOLUTION

1.1 Unit of Devolution

A regional council will be established for every province identified by a new schedule to the Constitution. One of the regions would be constituted by redemarcating the existing boundaries of the present North-East Province in full consultation with a view to reconciling Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim interests.

1.2 Regional Councils

A Regional Council will consist of such number of deputies as may be determined by law. A Regional Council will, unless sooner dissolved, continue for a period of five years. There will be a Speaker and a Deputy Speaker for each Council

1.2.1 Legislative power in the region will be vested in the Regional Council. Every region may make laws applicable to the region with respect to any subject set out in the regional list. The Regional Council will have no jurisdiction over the Reserved List.

1.3 The Governor

There will be a Governor for each region for which a Regional Council has been established, appointed by the President with the concurrence of the Chief Minister of the Region.

1.3.1 The Governor will vacate his office upon:

- (a) resignation;
- (b) a two-thirds majority of the Regional Council passing a vote of no confidence;
- (c) removal by the President.

1.3.2 The Governor may summon, dissolve and prorogue the Regional Council on the advice of the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister and the Board of Ministers

The Governor will call upon the person who commands the confidence of the majority in the Regional Council to form the Regional administration.

1.4.1 The Chief Minister cannot be removed from the office so long as he enjoys the confidence of the Regional Council.

1.4.2 Executive power in the Region will be vested in the Board of Ministers who will be appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Minister. The Board of Ministers and the Chief Minister will be collectively responsible to the Regional Council. Ministers will be collectively responsible to the Regional Council.

Capital Territory

The territory comprising the cities of Colombo and Sri Jayawardenapura-Kotte will be excluded from the jurisdiction of the Regional Council constituted for the Western Region and will be administered directly by the Centre, in such manner as the Centre may think fit.

2. FINANCE

2.1 There will be a National Finance Commission entrusted with allocating grants to the region, keeping in mind the objectives of balanced regional development.

2.2 Regional Councils will have the powers of taxation in certain specified areas, and the Constitution will require other revenue sharing arrangements.

2.3 Regional Councils will have the power to borrow as well as to set up their own financial institutions. International borrowings above a prescribed limit will require the concurrence of the Centre.

2.4 Regional Councils may regulate and promote foreign direct investment, international grants and development assistance, subject to such conditions as may be specified by the Centre.

3. LAW AND ORDER

3.1 There will be a regional police service headed by a Regional Police Commissioner appointed by the Chief Minister, in consultation with the Governor of the Region. The Regional Police Commissioner will be responsible to, and function under the control of, the relevant Chief Minister. The Regional police service will investigate all offences against persons and property.

3.2 There will be a national police service responsible for investigating offences against the state, threats to national security, offences related to elections, inter-province crimes and international crimes. The national police service will be headed by the National Police Commissioner and will

be responsible to the Central Government.

3.3 The recruitment, transfers within the region, dismissal and disciplinary control of members of the regional police service will be the responsibility of the Regional Police Commission.

3.4 There will be a National Police Commission, the functions of which will include the transfer of the police officers from one region to another in consultation Regional Police Commissioner.

3.5 The National Police Commission and the Regional Police Commission will both be appointed by the Constitutional Council. In the case of appointment of the Regional Police Commission, the Constitutional Council will act in consultation with the Chief Minister of the region in question.

4. LAND AND SETTLEMENT

4.1 Land will be a devolved subject and State land within a region will be vested in the Regional Councils. State land within a Region required for the purposes of the Centre in respect of a reserved subject may be utilised by the Centre in consultation with the relevant Regional Council in accordance with such procedures as may be established by law.

4.2 Priority in future land settlement schemes will be given to persons first of the district and then of the Region.

5. EDUCATION

5.1 Education and Higher Education will be devolved subjects included in the regional list.

5.2 Certain specified schools and universities may be declared 'National' institutions administered by the Centre.

5.3 The recruitment, transfer and disciplinary control of teachers other than those in National Schools will be the responsibility of the Regional Council.

5.4 Training of teachers will be the responsibility of both the Centre and Regional Council, depending on whether such teachers are to be recruited to the national or regional boards

5.5 Curriculum development in regional schools will be the responsibility of the Regional Councils. Minimum standards will be set by the centre.

5.6 There will be a National Education Commission composed of representatives of the Centre and the regions entrusted with the following functions:-

a) identifying 'National' schools and Universities in consultation with

regional chief ministers and stipulating criteria for admission into these national schools and universities.

b) setting minimum standards with regard to training, examination, curriculum and employment of teachers.

6. ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

6.1 There will be a High Court in every region. The High Court will exercise criminal, appellate and writ jurisdiction within the region.

6.2 The Regional Judicial Service Commission, which will be appointed by the Constitutional Council in consultation with the Chief Minister of the region, will consist of the Chief Judge of the High Court and the two High Court judges next in seniority.

6.3 Regional Judicial Service Commission will be responsible for the appointment of Regional High Court Judges and minor judiciary within the Region. The Regional Judicial Service Commission will consult with the National Judicial Service Commission with regard to the transfer of judges.

6.4 The Governor will appoint a Regional Attorney-General who will advise the Governor on the constitutionality of laws passed by the Regional Council. If a law is seen to be unconstitutional, the Regional Attorney-General, after consultation with the Governor, will institute action before the Supreme Court or any other tribunal specially set up to resolve disputes between the Centre and the Region.

7. PUBLIC SERVICE

7.1 There will be a Regional Public Service Commission (appointed by the Constitutional Council in consultation with the relevant Chief Minister) responsible for the recruitment, disciplinary control and dismissal of all persons employed by, or seconded to, the Regional Councils.

7.2 The Regional Public Service Commission will consult with the National Public Service Commission (also appointed by the Constitutional Council) in effecting the transfer of all such persons outside the Region.

8. COMMISSION ON DEVOLUTION

8.1 There will be a Permanent Commission on Devolution appointed by the Constitutional Council to resolve disputes between the Centre and a region or disputes among the regions. The Commission will have powers of mediation as well as adjudication.

9. FRAMEWORK RELATING TO DEVOLUTION

9.1 The Constitution will provide:

- that the Republic of Sri Lanka shall be united and sovereign. It shall be a Union of Regions.
- that the territory of the Republic will consist of regions, the names of which are set out in the first schedule, and its territorial waters;
- that the legislative power of the People will be exercised by the Parliament, Regional Councils and the People at a Referendum to the extent hereinafter provided; and
- that the executive power of the People will be exercised by the President of the Republic acting on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers, and the Governors acting on the advice of the respective Chief Ministers and Regional Boards of Ministers to the extent hereinafter provided.

9.2 Article 76 of the existing constitution will be deleted.

SUBSTANCE OF DEVOLUTION

10.1 Regional Councils will exercise exclusive legislative and executive competence within the devolved sphere. The subjects and functions will be distributed between the Centre and the Regions as set out in the appendix (see box overleaf).

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APPENDIX

Subjects and Functions of the Centre and Regions

(A) The Regional List

1. Health and indigenous medicine.
2. Education and Educational Services, excluding national schools and national universities and the setting of minimum standards for training, examination, curriculum, and teacher qualifications.
3. Agriculture and agrarian services.
4. Irrigation within a region.
5. Animal husbandry.
6. Fisheries.
7. Forestry and Protection of the Environment within the region.
8. Industries and Industrial Development.
9. Energy.
10. Transport.
11. Minor Ports and Harbours.
12. Roads and Waterways.
13. Housing and construction.
14. Urban Planning.
15. Rural Development.
16. Local Government.
17. Co-operatives.
18. Supply and distribution of food within the region.
19. Promotion of Tourism.
20. The regulation of cultural activity within a region, including public performances.
21. Broadcasting and media, including television.
22. Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction.
23. Social Security.
24. State land and its alienation or disposal (State land within a region required for the purposes of the Centre in respect of a reserved subject may be utilised by the Centre in consultation with the relevant Regional Council and in accordance with such procedures as may be established by law).
25. Regional Police and law and order.
26. Administration of Borstal and reformatory institutions.
27. Regional Public Service.
28. Sports.
29. Regulation of unincorporated associations and societies within the region.
30. Regional debt.
31. Domestic and international borrowing (international borrowings above a specified limit would require the concurrence of the Centre).
32. The regulation and promotion of foreign direct investment, international grants and developmental assistance to the region.
33. Regional financial and credit institutions.
34. Excise duties to be specified.
35. Turnover taxes on wholesale or retail sales to the extent to be specified.
36. Betting taxes, taxes on prize competitions and lotteries other than National Lotteries.
37. Motor vehicle licence fees.
38. Stamp duties on transfer of properties, such as land and motor cars.

39. Fines imposed by courts.
40. Court fees, including stamp fees on documents produced in courts.
41. Land revenue, including the assessment and collection of revenues, and maintenance of land records for revenue purposes.
42. Taxes on mineral rights.
43. Offences against laws with respect to any of the matters specified in the list.
44. Fines in respect of the matters in the Regional List.
45. Planning at the regional level.

(B) Reserved List (Central Government List)

1. Defence, national security, national police, and the security forces.
2. Immigration, Emigration and Citizenship.
3. Foreign Affairs.
4. National Census and Statistics.
5. National Planning.
6. Currency and Foreign Exchange, international economic relations and monetary policy.
7. Public Debt of the Government of Sri Lanka.
9. Regulation of Banking and other financial institutions.
10. Insurance.
11. Stock Exchange and futures markets.
12. Audit of the Government of Sri Lanka.
13. Taxes on income, capital and wealth of the individuals, companies and corporations.
14. Custom duties, including import and export duties, and excise duties (excluding such excise duties as may be devolved on the regions).
15. Turnover taxes and stamp duties, goods and services taxes (excluding those taxes and duties devolved on the regions).
16. Pensions payable by the Government of Sri Lanka or out of the consolidated fund.
17. Atomic Energy.
18. Maintenance and management of the National Grid.
19. Minerals and mines (regulation and development of oil fields and mineral resources, petroleum and petroleum products).
20. National rivers.
21. Airports, harbours and ports with international transportation.
22. Inter-regional transport and railways.
23. Civil Aviation.
24. Inter-regional highways.
25. Shipping and navigation; Maritime Zones including historical waters and territorial waters (Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf).
26. Elections (excluding elections to local authorities).
27. Posts and Telecommunications.
28. National Public Service and the National Public Service Commission.
29. National Health Administration (inclusive of existing special purpose hospitals and teaching hospitals affiliated to the national Universities; Training, education and research relating to Health; Development of National Health Standards; Administration of all special programmes).
30. Drugs, poisons and narcotics.
31. Administration of Justice.
32. National Universities.
33. National Standards with regard to professions, occupations and training.
34. National Standards relating to research, development and training in the area of agriculture.
35. Inter-regional irrigation schemes.
36. Fishing beyond the territorial waters.
37. Management of central policy and research institutions in the field of education eg. National Institute of Education; Management and supervision of national schools; conduct of national public certification examinations; imposition of minimum standards for training, curriculum and teacher qualifications.
38. Adoption of children.
39. National Industrial Research and Training.
40. Regulation of activities for the enhancement of quality standards.
41. Foreign trade, Inter-regional trade and commerce.
42. Patents, inventions, designs, copyrights, trademarks and merchandise marks.
43. Monopolies and mergers.
44. Inter-regional food distribution.
45. National media including Central Government Broadcasting and Television Institutions.
46. National Archives and Museums, and archaeological sites declared by law to be of national importance.
47. National Environment and National Policy on Tourism.
48. Specialised National Housing Programmes.
49. Specialised National Poverty Alleviation Programmes.
50. Youth and Women's Affairs.
51. Buddhism.
52. Development of National Sports administration and infrastructure.
53. Intervention in instances of National (natural and environmental) disasters and epidemics.
54. Labour regulation and standards.
55. Surveys for the purpose of any matters enumerated in the Reserved List.
56. Offences against laws with respect to any of the matters in the List.
57. Fees in respect of any of the matters in the List, but not including fees taken in any Court.
58. Public utility infrastructure development.

'A Political Mask to Cover Military Designs', says LTTE

An LTTE statement issued from its headquarters said that the Sri Lanka government has announced that it would carry through proposals for an island-wide devolution of powers. Along with it, it has also announced its intention to carry on the war with the Liberation Tigers until they are brought to their knees. Since neither of which is within the realm of possibility, this could only pave the way for a prolonged war, said LTTE spokesman Anton Balasingham addressing a Press conference in Jaffna on 11th August 1995.

Describing the so-called political package as a mask to conceal the government's military intentions, Mr. Balasingham said President Chandrika Kumaratunga had already promised the Buddhist Mahanayakes that she would not implement the proposals until the Tigers are militarily defeated and a war is brought to a finish. Under these conditions, how can she resolve the conflict through political means, or bring durable peace to the country, he asked. Mr. Balasingham declared that the Tigers cannot be wiped out, and if she thinks she could do that, then there would not be any necessity or compulsion for government to implement any proposals.

It is being stated that under this package, the areas that came under forcible Sinhala colonisation are to be excised from the Northeast region. It is also being stated that this is not a means to devolve powers to the Tamil people, but to all the regions in the entire island. The package has to be placed before the Parliamentary Select Committee. After the Committee sits on it, it has to go before Parliament which has to pass the bill with a two-thirds majority. The people's government has only a wafer thin majority in parliament, and within the Alliance itself there is opposition to the proposals. Having passed all these hurdles, the Sinhala people have to approve the proposals at a referendum. The Tamil people have the right to determine their own future. If any attempt is made to impose an arbitrary political settlement on the Tamil people through military means, the LTTE will resist it, Mr. Balasingham said. After all, some

years ago, a regional superpower tried to impose a shoddy political settlement through military means, and install a puppet regime, but the whole thing ended in a fiasco. President Kumaratunga is today trying to go through a similar charade. She has to realise whether then or now, the Tamil people are solidly behind the Tigers. If she pretends otherwise, she may have to take responsibility for the serious consequences that would flow from such a misadventure.

There are some Tamil groups who have taken shelter under the government umbrella in Colombo, who by the very circumstances under which they are placed, have to accept, willy nilly, whatever the government tries to impose on the Tamil people. Having entered parliament through electoral short cuts, they have very few options. We sympathise with them, but what they do, is of no consequence as far as the Tamil struggle for rights is concerned. But there are also some elderly, seasoned politicians who have seen several mirages in their political experience with the Sinhala political establishment over the past

40 years, but who are yet to distinguish between illusion and reality. Going back on the very mandate the Tamil people had given them nearly twenty years ago, they have been chasing shadows, and aspiring District Councils and Provincial Councils, and now they have fallen in love with President Chandrika's Regional Councils. We might forgive them, but the Tamil people will never forgive them, Mr. Balasingham said.

The LTTE was never against a peaceful settlement, and even today when the Chandrika government has closed its doors on peace, we have not given up hopes of exploring a peaceful settlement. Whether it is peace or war, we are ready for both. If the government halts its military operations, and creates the necessary atmosphere for peace by showing concern for the day to day living needs of the Tamil people, we are yet prepared for political negotiations. If on the other hand, the government tries to shut the doors against peace for all time, and intensifies its war efforts we will have no option but to close our own doors for peace, and set about carving out our own state in which our people can live in peace and dignity. Therefore, the choice of following the path of war and divide the country, or to seek a political solution to the Tamil national question is entirely the responsibility of Chandrika government, Mr. Balasingham concluded.

International Opinion Turning in Favour of Government

— Foreign Minister

Lakshman Kadirgamar, the distinguished lawyer and international civil servant, who became the People's Alliance Government's Foreign Minister in 1994, answers questions ranging from the country's foreign policy gains during his first year in office to the banning of the LTTE, in an interview with Rita Sebastian.

Excerpts from the interview:

Q: What would you say were the country's foreign policy gains in the last one year?

A: To a large extent we have been able to reorganise the Foreign Ministry itself. And in that context we have been able to make some very good diplomatic appointments, by manning the missions in various capitals with outstanding men.

Secondly we have given considerable attention to our Asian neighbours where there was a deficiency in past

years. And that does not mean only the SAARC nations but other Asian countries like China, Malaysia and Singapore which I visited.

We have also made considerable progress in our Human Rights record which was very bad in the past, earning the odium of the international community. To a large extent we have put that right. It is not entirely foreign policy but good domestic policy with foreign policy implications. We lifted the emergency except in the north and east and set up several commissions to inquire into involuntary disappearances. And legislation is being prepared to set up a National Human Rights Commission.

We have also removed the bad image we have had in relation to the

Continued on page 28

Political Package: Federalism in all but name

by Pakiasothy Saravanamuttu

The government is to be enthusiastically commended for its proposals for constitutional reform as conflict resolution. What is being offered is federalism in all but name. The president is to be congratulated for recognising its obvious utility in democratic nation and statebuilding. Moreover, given the entrenched chauvinist prejudice, misperception and stereotypes about federalism and powersharing that have compounded our national crisis for decades; she has been especially courageous and visionary in espousing a new paradigm for an united Sri Lanka as the policy of her government.

What is being proposed is that an 'united and sovereign Republic of Sri Lanka' should be an 'Union of Regions'. Executive power will be exercised by the President of the Republic acting on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers, and the Governors acting on the advice of the respective Chief Ministers and Regional Boards of Ministers. Legislative power will be exercised by Parliament, Regional Councils and the People at a referendum. Sri Lanka as an union will be a united state as opposed to the present unitary one. Articles 2 and 76, dealing with the unitary state and the exercise of legislative power by any body other than parliament, respectively, are to be amended by the adoption of the federal principle of powersharing and partnership in governance.

Each Region will have a Governor who will be appointed by the President with the concurrence of the Chief Minister. The latter in turn will be the person who commands the confidence of the majority in the Regional Council and who by virtue of that fact, will be called upon by the Governor to form the regional administration.

The exercise of the Governor's powers with respect to summoning, dissolving and proroguing the Regional Council will be on the advice of the Chief Minister. The Governor may resign or be removed by the President or a vote of no confidence passed by a two thirds majority of the Regional Council. The Governor will appoint a regional Attorney General who will advise on the constitutionality of the laws passed by the Regional Council. In the instance of a law being seen to be unconstitutional, the Regional Attorney General after consultation

with the Governor can institute action before the Supreme Court of any other body set for Centre-Region conflict resolution.

Significantly, the Chief Minister cannot be removed from office so long as the Chief Minister enjoys the confidence of the Regional Council and executive power in the Region will be vested in the Board of Ministers appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Minister. They in turn will be accountable to the Regional Council. Legislative power will be vested in that Council and can be exercised only over the subjects identified in the Regional List.

The federal principle is further expressed by the abolition of the Concurrent List. There will be a Regional List and a Reserved List and the regions and the centre will exercise their authority and power within the sphere clearly delineated. A Permanent Commission on Devolution will be appointed by the Constitutional Council to mediate and adjudicate in disputes between Regions and between the Regions and the Centre.

State lands will be vested in the Regional Councils and any such land required by the Centre for a Reserved List subject may be used for such purpose in consultation with the relevant Regional Council. Persons from the district and then of the region will be given priority, in that order, in future land settlement schemes. Other than schools and universities designated as 'National' institutions which will come under the Centre and minimum standards that will be set by the Centre regarding training, examination, curriculum development and employment of teachers, education and higher education will be Regional List subjects.

Every region will have a High Court which will exercise criminal, appellate and writ jurisdiction within the region. The Constitutional Council will appoint The Regional Judicial Service Commission in consultation with the Chief Minister of the Region. It will appoint the Regional High court judges and the minor judiciary within the Region.

In addition to the national police force under the National IGP and responsible to the Centre, each region will have its regional police service under a Regional IGP appointed by the Chief Minister in consultation with the

Governor of the Region. The Regional IGP will be responsible to and work under the Chief Minister. The national police force will investigate offences against the state, threats to national security, election offences, inter-province and international crimes.

The financial arrangements entailed will empower the Regional Councils to raise taxes in specified areas, borrow as well as establish their own financial institutions, negotiate foreign direct investment, international grants and development assistance. International borrowing above a certain limit will require consent from the Centre. A National Finance Commission will allocate grants to the Region, mindful of the objective of balanced regional development.

Admittedly, this package is a long way off from being accepted and implemented. It has to go through the whole parliamentary select committee process and then be accepted by a two thirds majority of parliament before it goes to the people at referendum. Whether it is to be presented to parliament and the people separately or along with the rest of the new constitution has also to be decided upon. Moreover, the controversial issues of redemarcation of territory in the east and the position of the Muslim community in the northeast have to be elaborated. There are also the questions of the LTTE's response, the continuation of hostilities and interim arrangements.

Notwithstanding all this, the package is an excellent foundation upon which an united and democratic Sri Lanka can be built. The president, her government and all those who want to see democratic governance and conflict resolution in this country, must canvass support for it on these grounds and ensure that support for the package is firmly embedded in the body politic. A solid informed consensus on federalism must be consolidated to make federalism an enduring reality in Sri Lanka.

There are the chauvinists on both sides who will employ a variety of means to kill the federal project we are now embarked upon. The government must lose no time in meeting their arguments with a clear and cogent rationale for powersharing. This would be greatly facilitated if at the outset the state media publishes a supplement which in lucid, comprehensible language explains the package to the average Sri Lankan, anticipates and answers their concerns. This document could serve as a basic reference point for the countless debates and discussions in private and public that

such radical reform invariably inspires.

The first argument that needs reiterating forcefully is that federalism is neither fatal or fanciful from the perspective of national unity. Federalism substantially satisfies the requirements of conflict resolution and good governance by allowing for democratic space for all. In spirit, in form and structure it is a crucial mechanism for unity in diversity, the ideal springboard for peace and prosperity.

As this column has pointed out repeatedly, the obsession with the unitary state and the gross over concentration of power in a single institution, office or person has been at the root of our national crisis. It has systematically nurtured horrendous authoritarianism, horrifying terrorism and brought us to the point at which a terrifying quasi-state has been erected in the north and east of the island. How on earth can federalism be castigated as the certain forerunner for secession in the face of these stubborn self evident facets of our contemporary history?

A section of Tamil opinion contends that the proposals will have to be altered to provide the Tamil community with a greater measure of power in the northeast Regional Council, in recognition of their distinct identity as a nation within the proposed Union of Regions. The argument underlying this contention is that the rest of the country has not asked for federalism. Moreover, the Tamil community has fought for it over decades. After so much death and suffering, how can the Chief Minister of the northeast region accept the same powers as the Chief Minister of any other region in the rest of the country. Is this fair; isn't this near political suicide for any Tamil politician?

Ironically, there are chauvinistic Sinhala elements who are propagating the thesis that this package benefits the Tamils at the fatal expense of the Sinhalese. The answer of course lies outside chauvinism.

All councils are to have the same powers. The government has crafted its package in these terms precisely to meet the objections of the Sinhala chauvinists. What is proposed is indeed much more than the Sinhala majority has asked for itself, but the reason for this is that it meets the demands of the Tamil community for federalism in substance.

This Tamil argument may be termed 'asymmetrical federalism' on the grounds of distinct ethnic identity. Ultimately it has to be countered by the holistic perspective of federalism as a mechanism for both conflict re-

solution and good governance. With federalism the hateful executive presidency must go; with federalism there will be powersharing and sturdy checks and balances to underpin democracy. We will be more responsible for our welfare and well being. Federalism must be accepted by all Sri Lankans for Sri Lanka.

Let us not duck the challenge that is

before us by distorting or misunderstanding it. This is a crucial moment in the history of this country and quite simply a last chance to hold it together. We have a president who has been bold enough to articulate a new vision for us. It is up to all of us now, politicians and people alike to support the package as the basis of a democratic and united Sri Lanka.

Political Package: An Instrument For Effective Sharing of Power

by Prof. Bertram Bastiamipillai
University of Colombo

The proposals for devolution, currently publicised, have been thought of even earlier, but in a half-hearted manner and in an incomplete form. For example, in regard to Language, Tamil was to be recognised only as the Language of a National minority and not as an Official Language. The Language of Administration in the Northern and Eastern Provinces was to be Tamil according to the proposals in the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact of July 26, 1957. The present proposals go further in making out that Tamil would also be used as an Official Language.

Regional areas were to be defined in the legislation and contained in a Schedule according to the 1957 proposals. Provision was to be made to enable two or more regions to amalgamate even beyond provincial limits and for two or more regions to collaborate for a specific purpose of common interest. Now the idea is made more clearer because one of the regions is to be constituted at present by re-demarcating the existing boundaries of the North-East Provinces. Of course, to avoid any unfairness there is to be full consultation so as to reconcile Sinhala Tamil and Muslim interests before re-demarcation is done.

Moreover, Parliament was to delegate specified powers in the 1957 provisions. The Regional Councils were to wield powers over spelt-out subjects, including agriculture, cooperatives, land, land development, colonization, education, health, industries and fisheries, housing and social services, electricity, water schemes and roads. The powers were to be defined. Almost all of these subjects and more are under the present scheme allotted to the proposed Regional Councils and they have been delineated quite clearly.

Importantly in respect of Colonization, the Regional Councils were to exercise the power to select allottees to whom land within their area was to be alienated and along with it to exercise the power to choose the personnel to work on such schemes. Now, it is said that under the new scheme that land will be a devolved subject and State land in a region was to be vested in the Regional Councils. Yet, State land if needed for the purposes of the Centre to be used for a reserved subject, may be utilised by the Centre, but in consultation with the council and according to legal procedure. Priority in future land settlement projects is to be given to persons of the District and then of the Region. So the present plan removes the ground for dispute or discord in respect of land affairs.

Interestingly, Regional Councils according to the ideas in the Pact of 1957 were to be empowered to tax and borrow. But now under the new scheme, Regional Councils could tax, set up their own financial institutions and even International borrowing upto a prescribed amount is to be permitted. A significant enhancement of authority is allowed in enabling Regional Councils to negotiate Foreign direct investments, international grants and development assistance.

The present plan extends beyond what was to have been allowed in terms of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact. Unfortunately, the B.C. Pact and other similar schemes were not allowed to come into effect and thereby prevent the escalation of ethnic strife and today more has inevitably to be given. As a result today we are beleaguered by a protracted civil war, and this could continue unless the problem from which it arose is settled by devolution.

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Then there was the Senanayake-Chelvanayagam Agreement of March 24, 1965 which again spelt out that provision would be made for the Tamil Language to be the Language of Administration and of record in the North and East. Furthermore, it was promised that a Tamil speaking person should be entitled to transact business in Tamil throughout the island. However these Senanayake-Chelvanayagam plans fell far short of the present arrangement which is more reasonable to and just by all communities. Also, it is more enlightened and progressive.

Instead of Regionals there were to be District Councils and powers were to be vested on the basis of a mutual agreement between Senanayake-Chelvanayagam. Land under Colonization schemes in the Northern and Eastern Provinces was in the first instance to be granted to landless peasants in the District, then the Tamil speaking persons resident in the North and East and then again to other citizens, preference being accorded to Tamil residents in the rest of the island. This plan thought of by Senanayake and Chelvanayagam has now been better refined and given greater clarity in the fresh proposals leaving no room for ambiguity and thereby contentions to arise later.

Then, after a lapse of years, and an abortive and futile endeavour at decentralization through a Scheme of District Councils in the 1980s through the Development Councils Act No. 35 of 1980, there cropped up the annexure 'C' which embodied yet another plan of devolution, decentralization. There was room allowed but on a prescribed condition for District Development Councils in a province to combine into one or more Regional Councils. This is quite different from the presently mooted system of Regional Councils. Those Regional Councils could be set up only if desired by the area. The leader of the party that commands the majority in the Council would be appointed Chief Minister and he would constitute a Committee of Ministers of the Region. This is almost similar to what has been now planned.

The President and Parliament manage subjects not transferred to the Region and those matters pertaining to the maintenance of sovereignty, integrity, unity, security and progress of the country as a whole. Meanwhile, the Regions' Legislative powers would lie in the Regional Council. It could enact Laws and exercise executive powers in regard to these subjects, specifically listed including Law and

Order, Administration of Justice, social and economic development, cultural affairs and land policy. As devolution is being conceived of today the matters to be left to the Regional Councils echo more or less similar thinking as in Annexure C but the current arrangement would in addition ensure all persons to fully and effectively exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination and equally before the law.

Annexure C also anticipated permitting Regional Councils to tax, mobilise resources via loans and there was the provision for a Finance Commission to be created to oversee allocations to Regions. A High Court also was to be established in each Region for judicial matters to be dealt with. For conducting executive business, a Regional Service was to be set up and a Region was to have a Regional Public Service Commission that would recruit and exercise disciplinary authority in respect of the personnel in the Regional Service. Almost all of these plans have now been re-thought of and incorporated but in a more coherent and lucid manner. There is no room for doubts or distrust. Instead of a Special Regional Police Force, Annexure C reflected upon establishing a Police Force for the North and East that would mirror the ethnic composition of these regions. The idea was to create a force in which the residents would repose confidence. For the administration of Trincomalee Port, a distinctive Port Authority under the Central Government was considered. The present proposals reserves for Central Government management Airports, Harbours, Ports with International Transportation. This is a far clearer enunciation in regard to places of national importance and there would be no fear that Trincomalee has been surrendered to someone or other.

The idea embedded in Annexure C regarding land spelt out that all settlement schemes would be based on ethnic proportions, so as not to alter the demographic balance. The present proposals however are more forthright and easily comprehensible and inspire greater confidence among inhabitants of a region that their lands would be allowed to be utilised by those within the region. All other schemes of devolution mooted earlier however remained mere promises and devolution did not come to pass in practice at all. Now there is greater ring of sincerity in the plan to devolve. It is a failure to devolve sincerely and satisfactorily in the past that had accounted for differences to persist.

Then, after much bloodshed, an

Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement was entered into in July 1987 to establish peace and normalcy in Sri Lanka. The multi-ethnic, multi-lingual plural society of the island was openly acknowledged.

The distinct cultural and linguistic identity of different peoples was recognised; and was to be nurtured. These and other self evident facts that caused trouble as they were not considered were proclaimed and the Sri Lankan Government was to implement the relevant proposals forthwith. But the 13th Amendment was later to disappoint, than to satisfy. Hopes were aroused but not fulfilled.

To this end, the 13th Amendment of 1987 to the Constitution was passed along with the Provincial Councils Act No. 42 of 1987. But these measures seemed to have been perverted in practice so as to subvert devolution almost wholesale. The Government was made into an omniscient Controller of regional matters, the Chief Minister was left in an attenuated position, the Councils were starved of adequate funds, and by introducing the practice of deciding what is National Policy by the Centre and confiscating subjects under it, the Centre left with little to be done by the periphery. In regard to sensitive but contentious subjects such as law and order, there really was no devolution. There was a concurrent list and naturally the Centre with its overmighty executive snatched much that ought to have been left to the Province. The creation of Divisional Secretaries controlled from the Centre was an act that made devolution of little use in practice. It put a full stop to devolution in many areas.

Clearly devolution cannot be viable as long as there is an overbearing Centre and the present proposed arrangements make explicit that an overseeing Centre will not intervene to thwart and stultify devolution. The abolition of the concurrent list and strengthening of the devolved list reinforces the devolution of power and responsibility to the Regions. The deletion of Article 76 of the Constitution provides for effective power sharing. In brief, whatever stymied devolution earlier has now been eradicated and there is manifest genuinity in the design for devolution.

(Courtesy of *The Sunday Times*).

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NEWS REVIEW

Government's Political Package

International Reaction: The President and her Government are entitled to be more than satisfied with international reaction to the political package it unveiled for the resolution of the ethnic conflict which has been quite favourable. The support it attracted has been almost universal.

The Australian Government in welcoming the proposals by the Sri Lankan government said that 'the sweeping constitutional reforms proposed by President Kumaratunga recognised the underlying causes of the conflict and demonstrate the commitment of the Sri Lanka Government to a just and peaceful long-term solution'. 'The Australian Government has consistently urged a political solution to the ethnic conflict and an end to the cycle of violence. The Australian Government hopes that these proposals... will be seriously considered by all the people of Sri Lanka as the basis for a durable settlement to the conflict', Foreign Minister Gareth Evans said in a statement released by the Australian High Commission in Colombo.

A spokesman for the Foreign Office in London said that the British Government warmly welcomed the government's proposals as 'a genuine attempt to meet the legitimate demands of all Sri Lankans', and hoped 'the LTTE would end the fighting and respond politically to the constitutional opportunities being offered' by the Government of Sri Lanka.

The French Government hopes 'the courageous plan for political reform of the institutions will be considered by the whole Sri Lanka nation and allow constructive dialogue to resume... and calm and harmony to return between the Sri Lanka communities', the French Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

In welcoming the government proposals, a spokesman for the US State Department, David Johnson, said the United States welcomed the Sri Lankan government's 'package of wide-ranging constitutional reforms that seeks to address the underlying political issues of the island's longstanding ethnic conflict'. He described the proposals as an effort to 'reform Sri Lanka's democratic political system in a way that provides for full political participation of all communities and protects the rights of individual citizens'. He added, 'We hope that the

proposals would lead to a constructive dialogue on finding a peaceful solution to this tragic conflict'.

Meanwhile, the International Relations Committee of the United States House of Representatives recently adopted unanimously a resolution supporting Sri Lankan Government's peace efforts. The resolution called upon the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to return to the negotiating table and give up armed violence.

Canadian Foreign Minister, Andre Quillet, said that the Canadian Government welcomed the Sri Lankan Government's proposals to create a new political order, which would create a 'Union of Regions' with a high degree of devolved powers. 'This is a positive development and we urge all parties in Sri Lanka to give careful consideration to government's proposal. Any initiative that points toward peace cannot be ignored... The people of Sri Lanka have suffered greatly for over a decade and deserve peace. The continued loss of life in engagements between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) underlines the futility of continuing to pursue a military solution. Moreover senseless attacks such as the suicide bombing in Colombo on August 7, which killed over 20 innocent people, must be strongly condemned. We urge the LTTE to give careful attention to this opportunity that now exists for a peaceful solution', Mr. Quillet said.

The European Union warmly welcomed the government's efforts to draw up a set of devolution proposals aimed at satisfying the aspirations of all Sri Lankans. The EU hoped that the far-reaching proposals the government has set out would be considered carefully and constructively by all parties. This could open the way for an early return to peace, normality and development throughout the entire country, the EU statement said.

The Times (London) editorially noted that the President 'had announced a courageous political package designed to devolve to the Tamils a substantial degree of autonomy'... which 'would transform Sri Lanka into a 'union of regions', and give to her country's provinces a status akin to that of the German *Lander*'.

In India, most of the newspapers and journals have congratulated the government for coming out with a far-reaching set of proposals providing the best chance for peace in the island. *The Hindu* referred to the government's courageous approach as a model for the entire South Asian Region.

The editorial comment in the widely circulated *Frontline* said, 'What is on offer to Sri Lanka's Tamil minority is nothing less than a radical transformation of a unitary constitution and polity into an equitable and democratic 'union of regions' structure. This will go a long way towards meeting the entirely reasonable demand for federalism as a way out of the ethnic crisis... The devolution package unfurled by President Kumaratunga on August 4, 1995 is impeccable in concept and, with respect to framework and substance, impossible for any reasonable party claiming to represent Tamil aspirations to turn down... President Kumaratunga's proposals represent a considerable advance on what is available to the States in India'.

Local Reaction: The Campaign for Peace and Democracy, a multi-ethnic umbrella organisation of a number of NGOs, in a statement said that the proposals of the government were 'greeted with widespread approbation by sections of all communities who long to see an end to the killings and destruction, charter a new course for the country free of sectarian strife'. It added that 'public opinion suggests that the ordinary Sinhalese people are very much for giving the proposals a chance, the Tamil people in the North, if they could express themselves freely, would support the proposals overwhelmingly'.

The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka (NPCSL) said that the international community was full of praise for the government's proposals 'as providing a model of conflict resolution and good government for the entire region'. It called upon the Government 'to present its proposals to the LTTE and for the LTTE to respond to them through dialogue'. The NPCSL's statement also called the 'Government and the LTTE to immediately cease all acts of violence and hostility and to enter into negotiations with local or foreign mediation using the devolution proposals as a point of departure'.

Tamil parties: Almost all Tamil political parties, except the LTTE, have expressed their support and welcomed the government's proposals. They claimed that if the people of the North had an opportunity to freely express their view, the people would overwhelmingly back the political package.

The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), a key member of the ruling People's Alliance, welcomed government plans to devolve power. The devolution proposals show that the government was prepared 'to take bold

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and progressive steps to share power with the periphery', an SLMC statement said. 'While as expected the question of the units of devolution has been left out, the SLMC is extremely happy that the Muslim political dimension in the country has been given due recognition', the SLMC said. The SLMC had previously in submission to the Parliamentary Select Committee stated that 'there should be a predominant Tamil Unit comprising the Districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Vavuniya and Mullaitivu in the Northern province as the base, and the identified non-contiguous Tamil areas in the Mannar, Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts'. In addition, 'there should be a predominant Muslim Unit comprising the constituencies of Kalmunai, Sammanthurai and Pottuvil in the Amparai district as the base, and the identified non-contiguous Muslim areas in Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Mannar districts'.

The leader of the Ceylon Workers Congress, Mr. S. Thondaman, who is increasingly becoming a semi-detached member of the PA Cabinet, while wholeheartedly endorsing the government's proposals, came out with a rather curious and controversial proposal in a memorandum to the President. He suggested that the North-East Region be given to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to be administered by them for five years and the task of governance under the political package should be entrusted to the LTTE, adding that the LTTE which has relentlessly pursued its struggle for the last 12 years should be regarded as the legitimate recipient of devolved authority and that the LTTE was equipped to wield power and to maintain law and order in those areas.

Thondaman's suggestion, besides being summarily rejected by the President, received short shrift from other Tamil and Muslim parties.

V. Anandasangari, Vice President of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) said that his party rejected this concept of just handing over the administration of the North-East to the LTTE as suggested by Thondaman. The TULF was always prepared to take part in an election if there was one held in the North-East but added handing over powers to a single party was not sensible. 'A large portion of the North-East Province is certainly not under the control of the LTTE and hence it would be impossible for the Government to consider Thondaman's proposal', he added.

The Secretary of the Tamil Eelam

Liberation Organisation (TELO), M.K. Sivagilingam, said that no country in the world has ever handed over powers of a vast region to armed groups haphazardly, and hoped that the PA Government would not pay any heed to Thondaman's idea. 'It appears to me that Mr. Thondaman is motivated by those working with him who have vested interests. Otherwise he is not a person to come out with such unwise proposals', he said.

The General Secretary of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), Rauf Hakeem, described Thondaman's proposal as 'preposterous'. 'No legitimate government will hand over the administration of a large province to armed groups. Such a proposal will not be accepted by any political party', he said.

Asked about Thondaman's proposal to hand over the North and East to the LTTE for five years, Mr. P. Chandrasekaran, a Deputy Minister and the leader of the Up-country Peoples Front, said that the people of those areas should freely decide as to who should govern them and 'not those of us here in this part of the country'.

LTTE's Position: The LTTE's position in regard to the government's political package was spelt out by Tiger spokesman Anton Balasingham in Jaffna on 11 August. He described the 'so-called political package as a mask to conceal the government's military intentions', as the government had along with the release of the proposals for island-wide devolution of powers, 'announced its intention to carry on the war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam until they are brought to their knees'. (See full text on page six of this issue).

Stating that what other Tamil political parties do 'is of no consequence as far as the Tamil struggle for rights is concerned', Mr. Balasingham was specially scathing in his attack on the TULF leadership, and said, 'We might forgive them, but the Tamil people will never forgive them'.

Mr. Balasingham added, 'The LTTE was never against a peaceful settlement, and even today when Chandrika government has closed its doors on peace, we have not given up hopes of exploring a peaceful settlement. Whether it is peace or war, we are ready for both. If the government halts its military operations, and creates the necessary atmosphere for peace by showing concern for the day to day living needs of the Tamil people, we are yet prepared for political negotiations'.

While some news analysts saw a glimmer of hope that the LTTE might be willing to return to the negotiating

table from what Mr. Balasingham said in the course of his press interview which was officially released under the authority of the LTTE's Political Committee, a EPRLF spokesman said, 'It sounds rather ridiculous for Balasingham to call a halt to the government's military operations when in fact it was the LTTE which withdrew from the peace process, closed the door for peace and commenced military operations by sinking the boats which were anchored in the Trincomalee harbour. It is now their turn to stop fighting and seek negotiations with the government on the political package'.

In the South: Even before the government's proposals were officially released, there were some of those, some influential Buddhist priests among them, who urged the President to postpone the announcement of the plan. 'The Tigers must be defeated before the proposed devolution package is announced', the Venerable Palipane Sri Chandananda Mahanayake of the Asgiriya Chapter told the press. 'While the entire country is burning this is no time to unveil the devolution plan', the priest said.

Professionals and academics, the so-called cream of the Sri Lankan intelligentsia, have been lining up for and against the government's proposals placing their signatures to articles and memoranda which have been given wide publicity in the local media. Joining the opposition to the proposals are the likes of the *Jathika Chinthanya* gurus, Gunadasa Amarasekera and Nalin de Silva (the latter has been in London whipping up opinion among expatriate Sinhalese living in the UK), and in the words of *The Times* (London) editor, 'those dinosaurs in the Sinhala Buddhist clergy to whom a federal political structure is anathema'.

The veteran campaigner for 'Sinhala-Buddhists', Gamini Jayasuriya, in a statement purporting to be from 12 organisations said that the proposed federal set up would be the first step towards an independent Tamil state. 'Under the proposed regional council, the Sinhala Buddhists will have no access to the Northeast region whereas the Tamils will be able to enjoy all the rights exclusively in that region in addition to equal rights in all other regions', the statement said.

As far as the mainstream print media in Sri Lanka is concerned, it is by and large anti-government, in particular anti-Chandrika. Pages and pages in these papers are being devoted for the sole and malevolent purpose of knocking down the govern-

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From The Sunday Leader, 13.8.95



From The Sunday Island, 20.8.95

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ment's political package. If the cartoons that appeared in *The Sunday Leader* of 13 August and *The Sunday Island* of 20 August are anything to go by, one could imagine what chauvinist poison the Sinhala papers must be spouting.

However, those who are in charge of the state-owned *Daily News* and particularly *The Sunday Observer* with the largest circulation are proving lamentably incapable of meeting the challenge of putting forward the government's case in support of the proposals. Of the 52 pages of *The Sunday Observer*, only two of its middle pages of its main section carry articles of political content of which, very often, substantial space is provided for articles which are critical of the government and its peace efforts. While one should not criticise them for giving space to views opposed to the government on grounds of the right to free expression, those in charge of particularly *The Sunday Observer* ought to take into account the substantial amount of space provided each week by its rivals, *The Sunday Leader*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Sunday Island*, for articles and commentaries on political and military matters, including the ethnic conflict, and open up more of its pages for articles and commentaries at least in the interest of redressing the imbalance that is patently obvious in the mainstream print media.

The main opposition party, the United National Party (UNP) has not made its position very clear, but its leader Ranil Wickremasinghe, known for his 'moderate views' is adopting a cautious approach. In a statement, the UNP said that while the party 'supports the principle of devolution, all

necessary constitutional guarantees should be incorporated to ensure that devolution does not lead to separatist and divisive developments'. While not expressing outright opposition to the government's proposals, the UNP has let it be known that it would not accept them in their present form or content, and would seek to move amendments when they were presented before the Parliamentary Select Committee. Certainly there appears to be a division of opinion within the UNP on the question whether to oppose the government's proposals outright or not. The former Foreign Minister and UNP's veteran Muslim politician, Mr. A.C.S. Hameed, is said to be in full support of the proposals.

The leader of the miniscule Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP) which is not represented in parliament, Mr. Dinesh Gunawardene, covering familiar chauvinist ground, and in the process indulging in mathematical inexactitude, said what the proposals outline was more than what was provided in the Indian constitution, adding, 'The government's devolution package will set in motion the disintegration of the country which would eventually lead to the establishment of Eelam... One third of the land, sixty-five per cent of the coastal areas of country and the most strategic port of Trincomalee will fall to the so-called Tamil homeland for six per cent of the population'.

The opponents of the government's proposals have sought to raise what they regard as three fundamental issues:

★ Vesting of all State land on Regional Councils: The central government will be prevented even to set up an army camp within the Region even in the context of a serious breakdown

of law and order or install any apparatus required in the interests of national security without the consent of the Regional Council;

★ Under the proposals, the President will not have the power to dissolve the Council, and take over its functions even if a Regional Council decides to secede and create a separate state. The centre should have the power to dissolve a Regional Council if the territorial integrity of the country is threatened.

★ The power given Regional Councils to directly negotiate and obtain development assistance and loans from foreign countries would lead to uneven economic development and economic and social disparities among the different regions giving rise to deep divisions within society.

Despite the orchestrated campaign against the government's proposals by chauvinist forces assisted by anti-government newspapers, the campaign doesn't appear to have mass support. On the other hand, hundreds and hundreds of professionals and academics are lining up behind the government. The Mothers and Daughters Front in a statement said, 'It is the duty of the peace-loving people to strengthen the hands of President Chandrika Kumaratunga, who took a bold step to find a lasting solution to the ethnic problem which is continuing to plague the country'.

More than one hundred academics and professionals from all walks of life said in a joint statement: 'We welcome the wide-ranging constitutional reform proposals offered by the People's Alliance Government as a political solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict... by presenting its own proposals to the people of Sri Lanka, the Govern-

ment has demonstrated a commendable measure of courage and political imagination.

'The present proposals contain a number of positive features. These proposals are the most extensive ever presented by a Sri Lankan Government to politically resolve the ethnic conflict... These proposals have been made at a time of intensified war. We appeal to both parties to the military conflict to take another bold initiative to enable the people living in the North and East to join the national dialogue in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity. We specifically appeal to the Government to take necessary steps to enable the people in the North and East to participate in this dialogue without fear', the joint statement said.

Except the Democratic United National Front (Lalith), which has expressed some reservations, all other constituent parties of the ruling Peoples Alliance, including the SLFP, LSSP, CP and SLMC have endorsed the government's political package.

Bomb Attack in Colombo

On 7 August, just four days after President Chandika Kumaratunga unveiled a new political package that would make Sri Lanka a federation of eight regions, one Tamil-controlled, the island's capital Colombo reverberated to the sound of a bomb explosion triggered off allegedly by a Tiger suicide operative killing 24 and injuring over 50 civilians.

The suspected suicide bomber, a man named Sinniah Sivanandan in his mid-20s, was killed in the explosion, and his alleged accomplice, N. Easwaran, was arrested and was recovering from injuries at a hospital.

Military police reported seeing the suspected bomber, pretending to be an itinerant vendor, pushing a hand cart filled with king coconuts outside the State TV Rupavahini building. Moments later, the bomb went off at the adjacent office building of the Chief Minister of Defence, Anuruddha Ratwatte, who is spearheading the military offensive against the Tigers.

According to police sources, the bomber was on his way to a previously designated destination, perhaps the Rupavahini and the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation building.

Information later released by the police indicated that ironically they had briefly held the suspected bomber in custody on 6 August less than 36 hours before he set off the explosion killing himself and others.

The Officer in Charge of the Borella

police had previously been tipped off with information that the Deputy Minister of Defence, Anuruddha Ratwatte living in Manning Town area, not far from where the explosion occurred, had been targeted for assassination by a suicide operative. Police officers in civvies were posted on duty in close proximity to the Minister's residence.

The police officers on duty saw two men pushing a hand-cart filled with king coconuts along the road on 6 August at about 11 am, and they were stopped and questioned. One of the men who identified himself as 'Giridaran from Ratnapuara, and on being unable to provide further details as to his identity and because of his inability to speak the Sinhala language, the police detained him for further investigation. The other person who was pushing the cart spoke Sinhala well and identified himself as 'Sinniah Sivananthan' alias Kumar and the police allowed him to go, but he turned out to be the actual bomber on the following day.

On questioning 'Giridaran', it was revealed that he was in fact 21-year-old Thangavelu Sivapalan from Konedavil, Jaffna. He joined the LTTE in 1990 and was trained in the expertise of firearms, armed combat and manufacturing bombs. He had been in Colombo before, but returned with fresh instructions in July this year. Police sources claimed that Sivapalan who is still in police custody had confessed that he and the two who had died in the explosion had been sent to Colombo on bombing missions by the LTTE's Intelligence Wing leader, Potu Amman. Police also said that on searching the house in Narahenpita where Kumar had been living for the last two years, they found explosives, battery packs, detonators and fuse wire.

Deputy Inspector General of Police, H.M.G.B. Kotakadeniya, told the press, quoting the confession of the bomber's accomplice who is now in custody, that the bomb had been intended for a 'motorcade with tinted windows' of the Deputy Minister of Defence, and that the handcart of explosives and coconuts being pushed by the bomber went off by accident before the Minister's 'motorcade with tinted windows' passed by on that day. The hand-cart fixed with the bomb had been pushed along the city streets for at least a week.

Tamil political parties in Colombo condemned the bomb explosion as an attempt to derail the political package unveiled by the President who should not buckle under this type of threat, they said. 'I do not think the govern-

ment should take this type of incident into consideration when going ahead with the peace process', M. Sivasiththamparam, the leader of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) told the press. 'The most effective answer to this type of action is to steadily go ahead with the peace plan. If you buckle to this, it will only encourage more incidents of violence like this', he added.

'We have to expect that the Tigers will try to disrupt the devolution plan', said Douglas Devananda of the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), which has given unqualified support to the President's political package. 'The LTTE will try to disrupt the peace plan. So will Sinhala chauvinists', Devananda told journalists. 'If she (Kumaratunga) gives in and is not prepared to take a bold stand you can never solve this problem', he said.

Condemning the bomb attack, Devananda said, 'If normal civilians are killed whether in the north or the south and whether by the army or the LTTE we very much condemn it', Devananda said.

Rauf Hakim, the Secretary General of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, said that this type of 'terror tactics will not work. If the Tiger ploy was to trigger off a communal backlash like in 1983, then they are mistaken. There is a different polarization now, and a healthy one at that'.

Some analysts in Colombo say the bomb explosion was timed to coincide with the release of President Chandrika Kumaratunga's political package for the devolution of power to Tamils. They feel that the blast was designed and timed to disrupt the debate on the devolution package by provoking a Sinhala backlash against the Tamils.

'If the Tigers were responsible, as it is suspected, then it is almost like their telling the government you had better talk to us', says a Tamil academic, requesting anonymity.

'The Tigers must feel that the government will be forced to negotiate with them when they know there is danger at their very doorstep', he says.

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Govt. Proposals: A Sound Basis For Autonomy and End of Conflict

More than 100 eminent persons, including educationists, political scientists and top journalists have hailed the Government's devolution package as a sound basis to rebuild a new Sri Lanka that is truly democratic and multi-ethnic through a genuine sharing of power among all communities.

In a statement, they said:

'We welcome the wide-ranging constitutional reform proposals offered by the People's Alliance Government as a political solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. The PA Government was elected by the people with a clear mandate to restore peace, ethnic harmony, and democracy in our war-ravaged country. By presenting its own proposals to the people of Sri Lanka, the Government has demonstrated a commendable measure of courage and political imagination. We hope that the people of Sri Lanka will use this opportunity to work towards rebuilding a secular, democratic and multi-ethnic country on the basis of a genuine sharing of power between all communities.

The present proposals contain a number of positive features. These proposals are the most extensive ever presented by a Sri Lankan government to politically resolve the ethnic conflict. They constructively build on previous attempts at instituting regional autonomy in Sri Lanka. They entail the sharing of legislative and executive power between the centre and the provinces. The political reforms envisaged in the PA Government's proposals can form a sound basis for deepening democracy and ending ethnic enmity in Sri Lanka.

These proposals have been made at a time of intensified war. We appeal to both parties to the military conflict to take another bold initiative to enable the people living in the North and East to join the national dialogue in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity. We specifically appeal to the government to take necessary steps to enable the people in the North and East to participate in this dialogue without fear.

'We are confident that all Sri Lankan people will reject extremism, violence and hatred, and see their collective future in moderation, peace and reconciliation'.

The statement has been signed by:

Prof. Carlo Fonseka (Dean, Medical Faculty, Kelaniya), Dr. A. Ariyaratna (Dean, Faculty of Arts, Colombo), Prof. Shirani Bandaranayake (Dean, Facul-

ty of Law, Colombo), Prof. R.D. Gunaratna (Dean, Faculty of Arts, Peradeniya), Prof. Leslie Gunawardena (History, Peradeniya), Prof. Bertram Bastianpillai (Colombo University), Prof. Birty Gajameragedera (History, Peradeniya), Prof. M. Sinnathamby (Economics, Peradeniya), Prof. Savitri Kumar (Chemistry, Peradeniya), Prof. V.Y. Kuruwita (Veterinary, Peradeniya), Prof. Breckenridge (Zoology, Peradeniya), Prof. V. Kumar (Chemistry, Peradeniya), Prof. A. Liyanagamage (History, Kelaniya University), Prof. V.C. Mahalingam (Vet. Science, Peradeniya), Dr. Osmund Jayaratne (Professor Emeritus), Dr. Sudharshan Seneviratne (Dept. of Archaeology, Peradeniya), Dr. Arjuna Parakrama (Dept. of English, Colombo University), Dr. Lalith Mendis (Medical Faculty, Kelaniya), Fr. Paul Caspersz (Satyodaya), Shelton Ranaraja (Lawyer), Simon Navagattagama (Writer), Dr. Radhika Coomaraswamy (Researcher), Manouri Muttetuwegama (Lawyer), Dr. Neloufer de Mel (Dept. of English, Colombo University), Dr. Sasanka Perera (Sociology, Colombo University), Victor Ivan (Editor, 'Ravaya'), Tissa Abeysekera (Film Director), Lucien Rajakarunanayake (Journalist), Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu (Political Scientist), Charles Abeysekera (Editor, 'Pravada'), Dr. A. Sivaraja (Political Science, Peradeniya), Dr. Gamini Samaranyake (Political Science, Peradeniya), Dr. K. Jayantha Kumar (Economics, Peradeniya), Dr. V. Kanapathipillai (History, Peradeniya), Dr. R.V.S. Rajapakse (Veterinary Science, Peradeniya), Dr. T. Manoharan (Department of Tamil, Peradeniya), Raja Uswatakeyawe (Journalist), Janaka Biyanwala (Economist), Malade Alwis (Anthropologist), Mangalika de Silva (Researcher), Sonali Deraniyagala (Economist), Qadri Ismail (Researcher), Dr. Jayadeva Uyangoda (Political Science, Colombo), Pradeep Jeganathan (Anthropologist), Ram Manikkalingam (Political Analyst), Kanchana Ruwanpura (Economist), Prasantha Ratnayake (Researcher), Dr. Sunil Wijesiriwardene (Writer), Dr. Kumari Jayawardena (Researcher), Natasha Balendra (Lawyer), Waruna Karunatileke (Edi-

tor - Counterpoint), W.N. Wilson (Geography, Colombo), Faizun Zackriya (Researcher), Ratna Sri Wijesinghe (Poet), I.V. Edirisinghe (Sociology, Colombo), Dr. N. Shanmugaratnam (Researcher), Shafinaz Hassendeen (Consultant), J.C. Weliamuna (Lawyer), Chandragupta Thenuwara (Artist), Tennyson Perera (Writer), Jayathilaka Kammallaweera (Writer), Vasuki Nesiah (Lawyer), Dr. S. Nanthikesan (Engineer), Ramani Muttetuwegama (Lawyer), M. Mahanama Thero (Colombo University), S. Manoranjan (Journalist), Fara Haniffa (Researcher), Pasan Kodikara (Playwright), Sunil Bastian (Researcher), A.R. Lakshman Fernando (Dept. of English, Colombo University), A. Patchamuttu (Publisher), Hector Abhayawardhana (Political Commentator), Sydney Wanasinghe (Publisher), Ketesh Loganathan (Researcher), P.P. Maniccam (Development Consultant), Nirmal Ranjith Devasiri (History, Colombo University), Ranjith Bandara (Economics Colombo University), Chandrika Maliyagoda (Student, Peradeniya University), N.P.M. Saibdeen (Political Science, Peradeniya), M.S.N. Anes (Philosophy, Peradeniya), V. Nandakumar (Geography, Peradeniya), M. Alfred (Economics, Peradeniya), R.R. Maheswaran (Library, Peradeniya), Ann Jabbar (Researcher), Kapila Kumara Kalinga (Writer), Manubandu Vidyapathi (Journalist), D.M.S. Ariyaratna (Writer), Ahinsaka Perera (Journalist), Dr. Laksiri Fernando (Political Scientist), Ravi John (Journalist), Ranjith Perera (Researcher), Neluka Silva (Researcher), Leela Isaac (Dept. of English, University of Kelaniya), Sunarida Deshapriya (Editor, Yukthiya), C.J. Amaratunga (Journalist), Sita Ranjani (Journalist), Kumudini Samuel (Human Rights Activist), Dr. Sepali Kottegoda (Researcher), A. Somaloka Thero (Colombo University), Nimalka Fernando (Lawyer), Anuruddha Loku-hapuaratchi (Journalist), Dr. Tissa Vitharane (Micro Biologist), Jayaratne Maliyagoda (Trade Unionist), Rohin Weerasinghe (Kantha Shakthi), Nandana Weeraratne (Journalist), K. Sarveswaran (University of Colombo), D.A. Siyamabalapitiya (Dept. of English, University of Colombo), Underwood Manivasagar (Lawyer), Anoma Pieris (Architect), O.T. Ramiah (Trade Unionist), Ragi Kadirgamar (Architect), Fizal Mansoor (Computer Programmer), Harini Amarasooriya (Sociologist), Sriyantha Walpole (Photographer), Loranthi Ellepola (Medical Student), Dananjaya Tilakaratna (Lawyer), Regi Siriwardena (Writer), Prof. Lakshman Disanayake, (Physics, Peradeniya).

Ethnic Conflict and the West

by Adele Ann Balasingham

Since the breakdown of the negotiations between the LTTE and the Kumaratunga Government, Sri Lanka's foreign office and a section of the Colombo media have been working overtime in a slanderous and vicious campaign against the LTTE. While the media has embarked on a wild, indiscriminate anti-LTTE propaganda steeped in racist sentiments, the foreign office headed by Mr. Kadirikamar, has launched a global disinformation campaign to discredit the LTTE.

Locally and internationally the propaganda war against the LTTE is in full swing. Violating all norms of journalistic ethics and standards of objectivity, the Colombo based journalists are crying out for an all-out war against the LTTE. The denunciation of the Tigers has broken all bounds of rational political discourse. All sources of information critical of the LTTE are being highlighted to build up and justify the anti-LTTE thinking that dominates the Colombo scene today.

While the local media is engaged in a mad frenzy to whip up ethnic war, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Kadirikamar is on a world tour slandering the LTTE and openly canvassing the foreign countries to actively assist Sri Lanka's war against the Tamil Tigers.

Fearful that the powerful and influential international Tamil lobby will effectively project the voice of the struggling Tamil nation to the outside world, Mr. Kadirikamar has called upon the foreign countries, particularly Western countries - to close down the LTTE offices. Projecting himself both as a Tamil and as the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. Kadirikamar thought that it is the right time to suppress the voice of the Tamil expatriate community when some foreign countries are critical of the LTTE over the breakdown of peace talks. But to his disappointment, he has not received a positive response. Since the political work of the LTTE branches throughout the world is neither directed against the host countries nor contravenes their national interest and does not violate the laws of the land it seems most unlikely that foreign countries would seriously consider Kadirikamar's request. These countries are too well aware that the suppression of political

activity can only be symbolic and does not lead to the end of political engagement. Proscription of the LTTE in foreign countries would violate the basic principles of freedom of political expression, political pluralism, multi-culturalism, tolerance etc., which western states pride themselves on. The closure of LTTE offices would not silence the voice of the LTTE and thousands of its patriotic supporters resident abroad, but rather would force an otherwise peaceful and law abiding immigrant community to take the unpleasant option of engaging in clandestine political activity to further the struggle of their oppressed brethren in Sri Lanka.

Such an eventuality would have negative effects on the social and political milieu in the host countries. The Tamil immigrant communities, constituting a significant population in various foreign countries, would feel offended when their freedom of political choice is tampered with. Most of these people are themselves victims of political persecution and are sensitive to the struggle in their homeland. They dream of returning to their motherland once the ethnic conflict ends. Therefore, any punitive measures to repress the political activities of these immigrant Tamil populations will not serve the best interests of the host countries. Furthermore, the western countries have articulated genuine concern for the restoration of peace in Sri Lanka and some countries have offered mediation to end the dispute. In these circumstances, any action to close down the LTTE offices would be detrimental to the peace efforts and the possible mediatory role of foreign countries.

In his global campaign Mr. Kadirikamar is trying to advance a thesis that war is absolutely essential to create the conditions of peace and he has requested the western countries to provide Sri Lanka with military assistance to promote its peace efforts. The international community, we hope, will not be confused with Sri Lanka's fantastic theory of peace which advocates war and violence for the realisation of peace, a theory which has been in practice for the last 15 years in Sri Lanka with disastrous consequences.

The military option has become

the latest strategy in the Government agenda for 'peace process'. To embark on a massive military campaign in the 'pursuit of peace' Sri Lankan military apparatus needs a great deal of shaping up and replenishing. Therefore, to undertake an all-out war as a necessary stage of the 'peace process' Mr. Kadirikamar has called for 'material assistance' from foreign countries to back up the political support the international community has lavished on Chandrika's Government's peace efforts.

Presumably the call for 'material assistance' is meant to read as increased military support. What else could it mean since the whole world knows that as a State, Sri Lanka has allies who have in the past, do in the present and will in the future satisfy Sri Lanka's regular military concerns? What Sri Lanka requires immediately is additional military assistance to bolster and strengthen its military hardware and capability for a major war.

Foreign states are bound to reflect very deeply and to weigh up the pros and cons of this issue prior to making any commitments. The political and military consequences are too grave. Firstly, and at the most obvious level, the distinction between the supply of either lethal or 'non-lethal' military hardware to Sri Lanka military forces for a military campaign cannot be sustained. 'Non-lethal' hardware supports lethal hardware and both will be deployed in military operations where civilian casualties will be inevitable. Supplier nations, will, therefore, have to accept responsibility for the killing and maiming of Tamil civilians, homelessness, destruction of property, violation of human rights that will necessarily accompany a military campaign.

In such an eventuality, the force of such noble political concepts as freedom, human rights etc., the pillars of the dominant political systems in the civilised world, diminish in strength and appear as hypocritical jargon. Surely the foreign countries fully understand that if the military might of India failed in its all-out efforts to break the will of the people and to defeat the LTTE then the only major impact of militarily supporting Sri Lanka will be to complicate the political-military context even further and contribute to the escalation and duration of the conflict.

While present political-military

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developments figure largely in the minds of foreign diplomats and foreign department officials a brief journey into history is sometimes necessary if a balanced perception of this conflict is to remain in focus. To begin with, let us look at the implications of building up a massive military force in a small country such as Sri Lanka. It does not require a great deal of intellectual gymnastics to understand that a small country with limited resources is financially incapable of supporting a large, sophisticated military apparatus, the consequences of which will be foreign debt, unemployment, poverty etc., leading to social and political instability. Military personnel will be, as they have been in the past, deployed to quell social and political unrest amongst the Sinhala population. Human rights abuses, for which the army is notorious, will become a permanent feature of Sri Lankan life. Foreign military support will foster such conditions. Similarly with the situation in the northeast. Military atrocities is one of the major factors for the emergence of armed struggle as a mode of political struggle by the Tamil people. Secondly, for the past fifteen years successive Sri Lankan governments have pursued the military path and failed to bring the national conflict to a conclusion. Indeed, the Sri Lanka state is as far away today as it ever was from political or military success in resolving this national conflict. In short, foreign countries have nothing to gain and a great deal to lose by militarily supporting the Sri Lankan government's war against the Tamils. In fact the political credibility and neutrality of many states will become questionable.

As the aggrieved party, the Tamil nation looks upon the Western world to take constructive measures to encourage both the LTTE and the Government to seek peaceful ways to resolve the conflict, rather than actively involving in assisting Sri Lanka militarily which will certainly prolong the conflict and produce negative implications.

(Courtesy of Inside Report June 1995).

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Most Radical, Most Enlightened and Most Progressive

by Chanaka Amaratunga

The devolution package of the Government which has recently been unveiled is undoubtedly the principal topic of political interest in Sri Lanka today. The search for a scheme of devolution that would satisfy the need for self government and identity of Sri Lanka's Tamil citizens and thus restore the fabric of national unity that became frayed in the 1950s, was sharply torn in the 1960s and 1970s and was almost totally rendered apart in the 1980s, has been a long one. Until now that scheme of devolution has eluded us and the result, continued, violent, ethnic strife, has been all too plain.

Ever since I became politically active in this country in the 1980s, I have insisted that there can never be a united, peaceful and free Sri Lanka, unless all the people who live in this country can genuinely have equal rights, can fully give expression to their needs for diversity and identity and truly feel that they are equally the heirs to all that is best in this country. I have insisted also that this state of affairs could never be achieved unless a maximum degree of devolution was granted to a number of units that approximate to our current provinces, through the creation of a federal constitution. I have often said what I believe to be true even now and for the future that the adoption of a federal constitution is the only means of recreating a united Sri Lanka and that is also a system that ought to be accepted for its intrinsic merits and as a means of strengthening the liberal democratic process in Sri Lanka.

Three serious attempts were made by the main-stream political forces in Sri Lanka in search of what has until now proved to be the illusive quest for a scheme of devolution that can truly unite this country. The Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987 produced the inadequate and ultimately unsuccessful system of Provincial Councils, the proposals contained in the DPA Manifesto for the Presidential Election of 1988 never saw the light of day as the narrow defeat of the candidate of that alliance led to the abandonment of that program, the devolution proposals contained in the Presidential Election Manifesto of the late Gamini Dissanayake in October 1994, which were more detailed and comprehensive than any previous attempt to address the

issues of the sharing of power and of national unity, died with him.

The package of devolution revealed recently in some minor respects goes even further than the late Gamini Dissanayake's proposals and is, therefore, in my view the most radical, the most enlightened and the most progressive schemes of devolution Sri Lanka has witnessed. If it becomes a part, an integral part, of the proposed new constitution and is operated in the spirit in which it must be, it provides the best chance yet, of the restoration of a united Sri Lanka.

This package of devolution which is thorough, comprehensive and based firmly on the spirit of liberal constitutionalism, on the recognition that the firm division of power amongst rival centres of governance is at all times constructive and a vital instrument in the preservation of a free society, has been drafted with an acute awareness of the errors of the past.

It recognises what only the late Gamini Dissanayake had the courage to recognise before, that the unitary state which many Sri Lankans believe to be the necessary condition of a united country, has in fact manifestly failed to keep our country united. By its declaration that 'the united and sovereign Republic of Sri Lanka is a Union of Regions' this package has committed itself to the only constitutional structure under which a meaningful devolution of power can take place. It has recognized that the failure of the Thirteenth Amendment makes it impossible to expect any political party that represents the people of the North and East to be satisfied with devolution of power within a unitary constitution. To make this recognition plain to the whole country, the proposed package envisages that:

the legislative power of the People will be exercised by Parliament, Regional Councils and the People at a Referendum. . . .

and that

the executive power of the People will be exercised by the President of the Republic acting on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers and the Governors acting on the advice of the respective Chief Ministers and the Regional Boards of Ministers. . . .

To further secure a genuine sharing of power between Parliament and Regional Councils which

will exercise exclusive legislative and executive competence within the devolved sphere.

The package includes a commitment to repeal Article 76 of the current constitution which declares that Parliament may not in any manner alienate its powers to any other institution.

The provisions of this package have quite rightly sought to ensure the full autonomy of elected Regional Councils. Gone from this package are the totally unjustified powers of the Governor in the current Provincial Council system which enable a Governor to assume the power of a Provincial Council if in his opinion there had been or was likely to be a break-down in the administration of a Province. The Governor as envisaged in the package, must act on the advice of a Chief Minister who commands a majority in the Provincial Council. Even in his appointment of a Chief Minister the Governor has to appoint a member of a Regional Council who commands a majority. Not as is the case now, a member who in the Governor's opinion commands the majority. Under these proposals the Governor is no longer an agent of the Central Government in a Region. He is appointed by the President, (who as envisaged in these proposals, would be a non-executive President) with the concurrence of the relevant Chief Minister, and therefore would serve as a link between the Centre and the Region. To this end the package also envisages each Region having its own Attorney General to advise the Regional Government of its powers. This is a very necessary provision as it is notorious that the Attorney General under the present constitutional arrangements has always demonstrated a bias towards the Central Government and Central institutions in interpreting the powers of Provincial Councils.

The lists under this package have been rationalised in a way that will reduce conflicts between the Centre and the Region to a minimum, first, by making the lists comprehensive, and second by eliminating the highly unsatisfactory concurrent list under the Thirteenth Amendment, retaining a regional list and a reserved list. Several powers which are not at present available to devolved units such as wider powers of taxation, and the ability to raise financial assistance abroad have been included in the regional lists. In an era that demands greater media freedom it is envisaged that both the Regions and the Centre

will be able to permit television and broadcasting.

An area which does require improvement is the financial commission that is to allocate resources to the Regional Councils. The proposals as set out do not indicate the composition of the financial commission. This must be set out as the composition of the financial commission must be one that adequately balances the interests of both the Centre and the Regions.

The provisions as regards the judiciary and law and order are quite satisfactory and envisage ordinary law enforcement to be a regional responsibility while offences against the state, national security and responsibility for security at elections shall be in the hands of a National Police Force.

The provisions on land settlement which envisage the vesting of all state land in a region with the relevant Regional Council while making provision for the Central Government to acquire land in any region for its purposes is entirely reasonable and in the North East, will go a long way towards allaying the fears of most of the inhabitants in that area of state organised colonisation schemes that would alter the demographic pattern to the disadvantage of the ethnic groups who have long resided there.

In keeping with the practice of federal states the city of Colombo and Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte have in these proposals been designated the capital territory and are thus outside the competence of the Western Regional Council.

The proposals as envisaged are silent on two significant areas which will have considerable bearing on their ultimate success. The first of these is the absence of any mention of the electoral system by which the Regional Councils will be elected. If the Regional Councils are to be a genuine reflection of the people they represent, the Regional Councils must be elected by a system of proportional representation which ensures accurate representation for all political parties and ethnic groups. The second is that it is an essential feature of every Constitution that involves extensive devolution of power to sub-national units that the national legislature is bicameral in character. A Sri Lankan Senate in which 60 per cent of Senators are elected from the Regions and the other 40 per cent are nominated from among distinguished personalities who can contribute to the Parliamentary process and to the strengthening of Centre-Regional relations would be a valuable addition to this package of devolution.

It is my view that the distribution of powers set out in this package of devolution, will if fully implemented contribute considerably towards the political marginalization of ethnic separatism and hence also to its military defeat. A genuine sharing of power among diverse peoples and regions as well as among diverse political forces, such as these proposals envisage, will help enormously in bringing about that national unity and peace which has so long eluded us. All those who are truly committed to a united and liberal democratic Sri Lanka should therefore give these proposals their fullest support. All of us should be aware too, that those who may oppose this package in the name of a united Sri Lanka would in fact be contributing to its destruction. It is imperative that is not they, but those who by supporting this package of devolution, stand firmly for a united, peaceful and free Sri Lanka, who must succeed.

'Traitor' Amidst the Debacle

The LTTE suffered one of its worst military debacles when an estimated 3,000 of its cadres mounted a concerted attack on 28 July upon a military complex composed of a main base camp and several satellite camps in and around Weli Oya in the Mullaitivu district in the northeast of the island, while its Sea Tiger naval wing attacked three coastal detachments.

While the Sri Lankan military claimed that they had killed over 300 Tiger cadres and displayed hundreds of dead bodies laid out in several rows before handing them over to the ICRC, the LTTE conceded that at least 128 of its dead were women without giving a figure for its male casualties.

For once, the army, navy and air force were ready and waiting for the LTTE assault leading to the comment that the forces had received an advanced tip-off about the impending attack. The Tiger leadership in Jaffna subsequently claimed that 'traitors' in their midst had revealed prior information to security forces about the attack.

According to army spokesman Brig. Sarath Munasinghe, the air force bombed 10 Sea Tiger assault craft and troops repulsed the inland attack, killing scores of Tigers. He also said the bodies of 182 LTTE cadres, mostly those of women, were recovered, but many more bodies had been seen strewn along the beach near the fishing village of Kokilai in the Welioya area and put the likely final death toll at more than 300. Muha-

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'Facing the Challenge Effectively and Honestly'

The following is the text of the address to the nation by President Chandrika Kumaratunga on 3 August 1995 following the release of her Government's political package to resolve the ethnic conflict:

'We Sri Lankans today are faced with the most decisive and challenging moment in our centuries old history. The decisions we take today are so fundamental that they will deeply influence and shape our destiny for many generations.

The aspiration of the entire Sri Lankan populace is that the current national crisis centred around the North and the East, be brought to a peaceful, just and an honourable settlement, ushering in an era of tranquillity and harmony. This crisis has, for the last few decades, drawn the entire Sri Lankan people without discrimination, be they Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim or Burgher, to the point of ruin, impacting adversely on all aspects of our national life. The ultimate consequence of this debilitating conflict is that a pall of gloom is cast over the life of the nation.

It is not only the wealth of the nation, not only the security and property of our people that is at stake but the very future of our children is now placed at risk. It is the major obstacle in the path of our progress, as a country and a nation. The reversal of our development efforts, increasing inflation and the cost of living and erosion of investor confidence further exacerbating the problem of unemployment are all direct results of the war. This is true not only of economic development, but democratic values and basic human freedoms are all endangered, driving our nation to the brink of disaster.

The tragic loss of the nation's children of all communities is woefully apparent. Murders, shootings, bombings and the like have created a situation where it is impossible for a person to walk on the streets devoid of fear for his or her life.

It is vital that we liberate ourselves from this unmitigated crisis. This is the challenge facing us. The only way this can be achieved is by eschewing divisions based on race, religion and political orientation and forging ahead, united in thought and deed, as one people. This is the central challenge faced by every Sri Lankan and this is the only means by which we can resolve this crisis.

The one major factor readily apparent to an objective analyst of the genesis and the history of this national question is this; during the 50 years since the end of the colonial era, the aspirations of the Tamil people were not adequately fulfilled within the parameters of the political process. Instead, a regrettable feature of the history of contemporary attempts to address their demands consisted of the disingenuous methods resorted to by successive governments. These resulted in acts of outright violence leading to the entrenchment of inter-racial anger, animosity and mutual mistrust amongst the Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Burgher communities. Consequently, we have had to suffer the bitter experience of witnessing the end of peaceful coexistence, so much a part of our cultural heritage built up over 2500 years. The humanistic principles which formed an integral part of the social fabric of Sri Lanka were shattered during 'black July' of 1983, an event which made a bloody imprint on the pages of history and which serves as a constant reminder of our unhappy quandary.

I would like you to reflect on two further aspects of the current situation. Firstly, you who are heirs to this country's heritage need not bear the weight of these shameful memories any longer. You are ready to cast off this burden from your shoulders. Secondly, we who have been entrusted with the governance of this country are equally ready to shun the lust for power, the instrumentality of state sponsored violence and the pursuit of narrow short-term political gain. Our Government which bears the responsibility for conducting matters of state stands ready to repudiate former attitudes and strategies.

What, then, is the responsibility devolving on us all?

It is the identification of the root cause underlying the current crisis which has persisted for so many years and the evolution of a rapid solution to these vexed issues. The first task is, therefore, a new approach predicated on unqualified acceptance of the fact that the Tamil people have genuine grievances for which solutions must be found.

The policy of a country must be structured on the basic premise that all sections of society are entitled to recognition as constructive partners in a pluralistic democracy. This is the fundamental principle on which our political vision is based.

In our view, therefore, the solution to the current problem lies in the implementation of a viable political solution of the contentious issues. This belief is at the very core of our political outlook which was in the Manifesto of the People's Alliance. This has been endorsed in the most emphatic terms possible by millions of people who voted for the Alliance at two consecutive elections. We have received the people's unequivocal mandate to resolve this problem through the implementation of a political solution.

The attainment of this goal represents a challenge which is daunting by its enormity. We have the courage to accept this challenge and the commitment to carry it through to an end.

My Government and I, with total sincerity of conviction, now place before you a series of proposals aimed at a lasting political solution. The proposals have not been arbitrarily or hastily formulated. They have been prepared in consultation with many responsible persons who have gained an insight into the current crisis. In essential terms, they represent continuity with similar attempts which have been made in the past in many policy-making fora. Each and every one of you will be afforded the opportunity of actively engaging in this exercise by articulating your views as the debate progresses. Your reactions in the immediate future will also assist us in giving full effect to the principle of complete openness with regard to the policy decisions of the Government.

From the inception of the present administration, the Government demonstrably displayed its honest commitment to the achievement of peace, but the LTTE spurned the hand of friendship extended to them, and is now engaged in fighting a war against the Government and against a peaceful resolution of the crisis. The LTTE are prosecuting the war by usurping the democratic rights of the people whom they claim to represent. The armed forces of the Sri Lankan Government are seeking to free the people of the North in an effort to give position to their hopes and aspiration for peace. The current military action is not, by any means, one directed against the Tamil people but is a battle for peace waged only against the enemies of peace.

The war is being fought according to

a well defined strategy. Our only goal in this war is peace. The Tamil people are aware that there is now in power a Government which is prepared to address their problems and propose pragmatic solutions at the political level. Recourse to arms is therefore unnecessary; all that is now required is the spirit of goodwill and co-operation among all the groups concerned in working out, with thoroughness and determination, the basis of a political settlement which will bring peace, stability and prosperity to the Sri Lankan community as a whole.

Our armed forces have demonstrated their ability and willingness to take on and overcome the LTTE. They have fully accepted that the war is being fought not against the Tamil people, but against the LTTE. The heads of the armed forces have directed their officers in keeping with the above policy and along the lines of a well-planned campaign.

I wish to express my gratitude and that of the government of Sri Lanka to those members of our Armed Forces, the Police and the Homeguards who have fought heroically and selflessly for the achievement of these ends, sometimes at the cost of their lives. We express our boundless gratitude and appreciation to them.

We are meeting the armed attacks of the LTTE with a well planned military campaign. But military means alone can not solve the minority problems of the people of Sri Lanka. For a lasting solution to the prevailing crisis, we have to evolve political solutions. My government is now ready to face the challenge effectively and honestly. As we express these thoughts, we are acutely aware that extremist forces which are against the government and peace, are striving directly and indirectly to frustrate our efforts. The first comment I would make regarding such forces is that they have not propounded a viable alternative to the measures proposed by us. Their course of action consists of exhorting others to make war, while they themselves hide behind hollow, extremist views filled with hatred. I earnestly urge you to reject them.

We have travelled far in a very short time along the path you have chosen. Our passage was rendered smooth by the support you gave us. We have received wide-spread approval from the international community. Even in the midst of a war, we have received hitherto unprecedented commitments of foreign aid. Many nations in Asia, the Middle-East and in the West have expressed their support for the Government, and their strong displeasure

with the LTTE's course of action.

We request your continued support and blessings in our quest for peace, we are unshaken in our commitment to achieve the reconstruction of a new society based on equality, justice and mutual co-operation. My earnest wish is that we go forward fortified with our good wishes.

In our policy statement on January 6th 1995, we reiterated our commitment to a new vision of Sri Lanka grounded on the principles of equality, accommodation and tolerance. We stated in the statement 'we have a vision of Sri Lanka where all communities can live in safety and security, where human dignity is valued and equality of treatment is an accepted norm of public life. We believe that all communities must be given the space to express their identity, and participate fully in the life of the nation, whether it be at the national, provincial or local level. . .'. With this objective in view, the government is seeking to rebuild the constitutional foundation of a plural society within a united and sovereign Republic of Sri Lanka. This Republic will be a Union of Regions. This exercise is based on the following principles:

- (a) An effective constitutional framework for the devolution of power to regions based on credibility, clarity, and an internally consistent and coherent value system, which is capable of effective implementation and includes structures for the just resolution of centre-region disputes;
- (b) to encourage the regions and communities which inhabit them to become constructive partners of a stable and pluralistic democracy.
- (c) to ensure that all persons may fully and effectively exercise all their human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full quality before the law;
- (d) to give recognition to Sinhala and Tamil as official languages and to thereby accord equality of status to the official languages, and to recognise English as a link language;
- (e) to protect the identity of distinct communities and create conditions for the promotion of that identity, including the right to enjoy their own culture, profess and practice their own religion, and nurture and promote their own language, and to transact business with the state in the national language of their choice.

We may now proceed to summarise the proposals on the devolution of

power to regions. The scheme of devolution envisages constituting regional councils for every province with exclusive legislative and executive competence. In the north-east, there would be a redemarcation of existing provincial boundaries with full consultation to ensure a reconciliation of Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim interests.

Each Region would have a Region Council with the legislative competence within the devolved sphere and a Governor and a Board of Ministers who will exercise the executive power of the region. The Governor will be appointed by the President with the concurrence of the Chief Minister and the Governor shall act on the advice of the Chief Minister and the Board of Ministers. The Governor will call upon the person who commands the confidence of the majority in the Regional Council to form the Regional Administration. The Chief Minister cannot be removed from office so long as he enjoys the confidence of the Regional Council.

The subjects to be devolved and those to be retained by the Centre are set out in detail in the proposals. In the demarcation of the relative powers and responsibilities of the centre and the region, there would be no concurrent list. In this regard, the centre would retain defence, national security, foreign affairs, immigration, currency, international economic relations, monetary policy, airports and harbours, inter-regional transport, national media and national archives and museums, and archaeological sites declared by law to be of national importance, banking and insurance, Buddhism and inter-regional irrigation. The full list of subjects reserved to the centre will be in the proposals. The subjects and functions exclusively devolved on the region would include education and educational service, local government, housing and construction, agriculture, health, irrigation within a region, transport, industries and industrial development, fisheries and social security.

In the field of law and order -

There would be a national police service responsible for investigating the offences against the state, and threats to national security and it would be headed by a national IGP who would be responsible to the central government.

There will be a regional police service responsible to the relevant Chief Minister.

A regional Police Commission will be responsible for the recruitment and

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**ALL MEMBERS – PLEASE ATTEND
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Yours support is very much appreciated

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disciplinary control of the members of the regional police service.

Land will be a devolved subject and State land within a region will be vested in the regional councils. State land within a region required for the purposes of the Centre in respect of a reserved subject shall be utilised by the Centre in accordance with such procedures as may be established by law.

There will be a High Court and a Regional Judicial Service Commission in every region. The High Court will exercise criminal, appellate and writ jurisdiction within the region. There would also be a Regional Public Service and the Regional Public Service Commission which will be responsible for recruitment and disciplinary control of all persons employed by or seconded to the Regional Councils.

Regional Councils will have powers of taxation and there would be other arrangements for the sharing and

assignment of revenue. A devolution commission will seek to resolve through mediation and adjudication centre - regional disputes.

The Constitutional framework relating to devolution will ensure that Sri Lanka is a united and sovereign Republic and that it is a union of regions.

Our nation is on the cross-roads of history. Our most formidable challenge is to build a nation with which all communities and religious groups can identify and feel part of. Many previous attempts to evolve a durable solution to the ethnic conflict have failed for a want of sincerity, resolve and imagination. Those who examine these proposals will find that our government has made a genuine and serious attempt to share power with regions while retaining the unity of the Republic. As early as in 1926, Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike prophesied that 'In Ceylon, each province should have complete autonomy... A thousand and one objects could be raised against this system, but when

objections were dissipated... it would be (acknowledged as) the only solution'. I urge all political parties and concerned groups to support these proposals which are intended to resolve the crisis in the north-east within a framework which reconciles the interests of all communities.

My late father speaking at the dawn of independence at the assembly hall in Torrington Square stated as follows:

'Compared with the great and powerful nations of the world, we are but a small people living in a small country, but our history is rich with examples of noblest impulses that move mankind - heroism, chivalry, piety, sacrifice and service. We shall need them all, if we are to triumph in the dark and difficult days that lie before us'. That is truer today than it was then.

This is our moment in history. Let us together grasp it and dispel hatred and distrust and frame a common future which we can be all proud of.

4 August 1995.

Beliefs and Myths in Lanka's Ethnic Conflict

by Dr. S. Narapalasingam

Definitions

A myth is usually associated with a traditional story of ostensibly historical events narrated often in order to legitimate a particular view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon. The distinction between myth and belief is important to expose the distorted views reported recently on the ongoing ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. A belief in this context means the acceptance of something with certainty as true or real, chiefly based on the examination of all relevant and available information at that time. There is a grey area between belief and doubt when the supporting bases are the personal experiences of some members of the concerned group. If the same experiences are realised by significantly large number of its members, then the beliefs are accepted as true by the group. Since a belief in this case, however convincing to be true to the concerned group can be disputed by others because they either have not gone through the same harrowing experiences or deliberately want to disagree for selfish reasons. It is possible for a belief to be realised as untrue when the earlier evidence that supported it is discovered later to be biased or new evidence comes to light

to discard completely the old. Modern science has many examples of previous beliefs having been revised or abandoned completely when subsequent research revealed new information. The belief that the earth was flat prevailed until it was disproved by new evidence and so was the erroneous belief that the sun moved round the earth. A belief based on the same experiences of many persons can only be changed later by remedial measures taken to counteract those very factors that contributed to it. The dissemination of the relevant unbiased information is also crucial for changing previous beliefs. In contrast, faith is firm belief in something for which there is no need to show concrete proof or cite the same collective experience of many and is usually associated with the doctrines of a religion.

Exploiting Ethnic Divisions

Ethnicity and religious faith are similar in the sense that people belong to the same ethnic group of religious faith through inheritance and not by choice, although in the latter case there are few converts by conviction or necessity from one faith to another. The holy wars that took place in many parts of the world a long time ago were

inspired by the desire to spread a particular faith or to protect some faith from annihilation. Even ethnic cleansing has its roots in the same old psyche of our ancestors. Ethnic or religious wars left in their wake distrust between the different groups and durable fear of losing their distinct identities through machinations by the group wielding powers of governance in heterogenous societies.

Politicians in independent Sri Lanka found an effective means of gaining and sustaining political power by exploiting this very same distrust and fear. They did not pursue policies that would have fostered mutual understanding and racial tolerance and allayed fears of 'annihilation' because these did not serve their own selfish interests. Many multi-religious societies have progressed significantly since the times of major holy wars to the ultimate stage of respecting others' faith. However, with regard to ethnicity the same tolerant attitudes and racial harmony are absent in countries like Sri Lanka primarily because of the exploitation of the ethnic differences by politicians to capture power. The contrasting attitude of religious leaders (except when they assume the role of political mentors or leaders) can be explained to the absence of greed for earthly benefits or fleeting popularity that come with political power.

Manipulating and Controlling Information

A myth by definition is not based on

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factual information. It is this factor that makes it important to examine the objectivity of the information that supports a particular view as legitimate and not a myth. Information is knowledge obtained from objective investigation or study of events and hence, by definition, must be factual. In the context of this discussion, information from the above standpoint entails the collection of knowledge through either impartial observation of events that have some bearings on the lives or attitudes of people or comprehensive analysis of authentic records of relevant events that occurred in the past.

In practice, opinions often are mistakenly accepted as information, especially by the majority of ordinary people. This is encouraged by the mass media and even by governments. The reason is obvious; for information obtained scientifically and dispersed freely can be detrimental to the commercial interests of the magnates in the mass media and to the political interests of governments. Hence the desire to have control over the flow of information. Seldom a clear distinction is explicitly made between the opinions of correspondents, historians and politicians and facts reported in the media. Even scholars in Sri Lanka have contributed to this deceptive perception of information. Opinions tend to be accepted as facts by repetition and by the misleading ways they are presented to the general public.

In dictatorial regimes, access to information from outside sources is denied to the people through various controls. Similarly, the outside world has access only to the information on internal matters provided by the authorities. This serves the authorities admirably as their 'information' which invariably promote their ideology or justify their actions tend to get accepted as accurate. Although all governments in Sri Lanka were committed to democracy, some had controlled either directly or indirectly the flow of information. Ideal situations were created to spread myths and conspiratorial theories and confirm inspired 'beliefs' during times of crisis. Ironically, government's own restrictions are contribution to the inaccessibility of even their own information to the residents in Jaffna! Conflicting information on the situation in Jaffna cannot be verified in the absence of independent reports.

Challenge to the Concept of Tamil Homeland

The book on a historical appraisal of

the claim of Sri Lankan Tamils that the North-East region is their traditional homeland by Professor K.M. De Silva has been reviewed by Partha S. Ghosh, Director, Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi in *The Sunday Island* of July 2, 1995 - 'Myth of Tamil Homeland in Sri Lanka'. The reviewer has made a distinction between 'perceptual myths' and myths created by 'historical facts'. It is claimed that unlike the former, the latter are 'less dangerous because their veracity is verifiable'. The reviewer also claims that he has studied Sri Lanka's ethnic problems closely and has no doubts about the illogical approach of the Indian Government in 1987 to transplant the Indian federal model 'to Sri Lanka, a country with only two or three major ethnic groups, without any provincial tradition worth the name and one-fifth of India's size'. Furthermore, he has no doubts that the Indian Government's thinking in terms of a unified North-Eastern province has been a gross error. In his mind, 'De Silva's book has cleared some of the mysteries about the demand for the Tamil Homeland'. But by adding mercifully the proviso, namely, 'nothing is the last word in historical research and it should provoke the Tamil ideologues to come out with a counter-thesis', he has left some leeway to change his mind!

It is astonishing that a person who claims to be fully knowledgeable on the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka, to state that 'as long as this challenge is not accepted the present Tamil case would remain weak'. First, he should know that the ancient history of the people of Sri Lanka is biased and the Sinhalese and Tamil perceptions are different. I have made this point in my article on 'Misconceptions and Anxieties - II' published in the *TT* of May 1995. His assertion that unlike 'perceptible myths', the veracity of 'historical myths' are verifiable shows that he is unaware of the controversies surrounding the history of the people of Sri Lanka. The veracity of the 'information' used in the historical studies on Sri Lanka is questionable.

The flaws in the methodologies and arguments used to change a fact into a myth and vice-versa have been dealt with by many scholars. Rajan Hoole in his articles under the titles 'The Homeland Question, Scholarship Without Ethics and the Second Front' and 'Tamil Homeland and Heritage: An Examination of Accredited Scholarship' published in *Counterpoint*, December 1994 has exposed these deliberate efforts. The recent contributions of contemporary scholars highlight the bias and contradictions in the

historical information on Sri Lanka and illustrate how even more recent data has been used selectively to support a particular view. (Reference is made to the studies in the book - 'The Sri Lankan Tamils, Ethnicity & Identity' edited by Chelvadurai Manogaran and Bryan Pfaffenberger, Westview Press, 1994).

Second the reviewer has discredited the demand for a federal state in Sri Lanka by making comparison with the size and ethnic diversity of India. His comparison would have some validity, if he too believes that federalism implies secession. This view widely promoted by Sinhalese politicians and which yielded political dividends in the past is a typical myth. The vigorous propagation of this myth appears to have made it difficult to use the emotive F-word - federalism in any political package to solve the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Recently, a multi-ethnic group of 36 Sri Lankan professionals have forcefully renewed and rejuvenated the argument for peace. ('Peace, Lies and Ethnic Conflicts' in *The Sunday Island* of July 16, 1995). They believe that the fact the Tamils have historically inhabited the Northeast is irrelevant and what is relevant to the resolution of the present conflict is the history of discrimination against the Tamils by the State. The ethnic factor, particularly with regard to the delimitation of the territory in the Eastern province for devolving powers, cannot be ignored at present due to certain beliefs of the minority communities emanating from the inter-racial conflicts themselves. These are elaborated below.

Tamil Chauvinism and Sinhalese Fears

Seeds of distrust and hatred were planted in the minds of children through the country-wide educational system that glorified the chauvinism of the Sinhalese and Tamils in their respective text books. The teaching of religion, literature and history emphasized the division in the society and failed to focus on the difference between the past situations and present requirements in the modern world. Religious studies failed to inculcate moral standards, compassion and tolerance in the minds of children. In fact, the emphasis fell on mythical anecdotes and not on the underlying precepts.

Until the late 1980s when the Indian army was invited by the Government of Sri Lanka to help in ending the civil war, the myth that the Tamils in Sri Lanka gave their allegiance to India prevailed among many Sinhalese. Indeed, this myth contri-

buted to the Sinhalese perception of belonging to an endangered minority group in the sub-region embracing Tamil Nadu in south India and the whole of Sri Lanka. The corollary of this feeling is the apprehension of the Buddhist clergy in Sri Lanka that Buddhism as practised by the Sinhalese would not survive under Tamil (non-Buddhist) domination. On the other hand, the myth of Indian protection to the Tamils in the event of total oppression by the Sinhalese also prevailed among many Sri Lankan Tamils until this time. In situations where people take seriously even 'perceptual myths', one myth leads to another. An argument for denying the Tamil demands re-emerged recently on the premise that if some demands are granted, the Tamils will claim more and more which would be disastrous to the Sinhalese! The advocates do not realize that it is this kind of logic that serves to support the claim for a separate Tamil Eelam! Thus, the racially motivated myths which contributed to the distrusts and fears, ultimately leading to the present predicament of all Sri Lankans were nurtured by both Sinhalese and Tamils. Concerted efforts were not made to debunk them.

Beliefs that Sustained the Ethnic Friction

There are many beliefs, falling within the definition given at the very outset, that have sustained the friction between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities. Among those mentioned here are some which have recently been portrayed as myths and lies by some Sinhalese scholars and professionals in the wake of the collapse of the peace talks and the immediate resumption of hostility by the LTTE on April 19.

(1) The belief that continued settlement of Sinhalese families in the North-East by successive governments under their colonization schemes, despite the strong protests of the Tamil leaders, has been to weaken the political influence of the Tamils by changing the demographic pattern in the electorates there, is widespread among the Tamils. The comment that the colonization projects in the north and east have not distorted the ethnic ratios in these areas is gross travesty of observed facts.

(2) The belief that the Tamils were discriminated against by previous governments in employment and in admissions to the universities remained strong, the latter especially in the 1970s (notwithstanding the recent claim to the contrary by a university don). Discrimination in employment

and education was widely believed to be a major factor that gave rise to Tamil militancy.

(3) The belief of the Tamil people that the development of the areas of Tamil concentration in the North-East was ignored by the State is easily visible to all, and the relevant information is available in various official publications as part of the national economic statistics.

(4) The belief that successive governments failed to implement their own remedial measures, which they had declared would alleviate the hardships experienced by the Tamils as a result of their lopsided acts enacted primarily for short-term political gains had a far reaching effect in undermining the trust of the Tamil people in the governments. The provision for the reasonable use of Tamil to mitigate the extremism of the 1956 Sinhala Only Act was not implemented. Even after legislating Tamil also as an official language of Sri Lanka following the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 1987, its implementation has been deficient. Attention is drawn here to the 1957 Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact and the 1965 Dudley Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact agreed to pacify the Tamil demand for the decentralisation of governing powers but were abrogated later.

(5) The belief that the lives and properties of Tamils are insecure and unsafe under the majority rule of the Sinhalese has been reinforced by the anti-Tamil riots of 1958, 1977, 1979, 1981 and 1983. The last pogrom instigated by some Sinhalese leaders was notorious for its severity. Those responsible for the burning of the public library in Jaffna in June 1981, which destroyed 97,000 valuable books and rare documents held key positions in government. Subsequent actions of the security forces in the Northeast such as arbitrary arrests, detention without trial, torture, deaths and disappearances of detainees all contributed to the contention of this belief. Although such extra-judicial punishments were common during the time of JVP's insurgency, these were perceived by the Tamils as part of the wide anti-Tamil aggression.

(6) The belief that without a militant struggle the Sinhalese leaders would not grant the basic demands of the Tamils was reinforced by the negative and aggressive way they responded to the peaceful methods of protests organized by the FP and later the TULF over more than two decades. It is relevant to note that the very policies which the governments vehemently implemented and which the Tamils

protested non-violently, undermined the unity of the nation.

(7) The relentless artillery shelling of residential areas in the North and indiscriminate aerial bombing by the security forces fighting the LTTE have not helped to win the hearts and minds of the Tamil people. On 9th July 1995 St. Peter's Church in Navaly and an adjoining school were hit by warplane bombs, killing and injuring many civilians, who had taken refuge there. These were buildings designated as safe by the military. In the six-day retaliatory attack of the government forces in the Jaffna peninsula launched on July 9 (following the series of assaults since April 19 by the LTTE on military targets), civilians were reported to have fled the areas of fighting. The unofficial estimates of civilian casualties during the six days, provided by the Jaffna Citizens Committee were 300 killed and 500 wounded. A similar operation in 1987 by the Sri Lankan army devastated large parts of Jaffna peninsula forcing thousands of refugees to flee to India. The military actions against the civilians belies the Government's stance that the LTTE and the Tamil people are separate entities.

(8) The belief that through deception self-seeking political goals can be achieved has prevailed among many leaders in Sri Lanka. This in turn led to another related belief that parties functioned with hidden agendas different to those declared publicly, e.g. election promises and party manifestos. The feeling that not only the LTTE but also the government had a hidden agenda for settling the ethnic conflict different to that expected by the people from their pronouncements gained some credibility by government's reluctance to reveal the mysterious 'peace package' to the people.

(9) Beliefs that undermine the trust between different communities are also as perilous as those between the State and any community. For example, the way the Muslims in Jaffna were driven out at very short notice and the mass killing of 140 Muslims in Kattankudy and another 122 in Eravur in 1990 gave rise to the belief among those Muslims who had lived for generations among the Tamils in the North-East that the LTTE (presumably not the Tamils) cannot be trusted. Troublemakers try to capitalize such beliefs to intensify communal hatred as was evident from the photocopied letters purportedly sent by the LTTE to Muslim leaders in Puttalam asking them to leave the town by August 1 or die! Sinhalese civilians too

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TAMIL NADU

An Upbeat Meet

MDMK identifies ideology and allies

T.S. Subramanian
in Tiruchi

The Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), founded a little more than a year ago, has come into its own. This was evident from its three-day State conference on June 30, July 1 and 2 at Tiruchi, where it not only consolidated the party structure but did some serious deliberation on the problems confronting the country and the State. The event also made the cadres confident that the party was gearing itself to face the parliamentary and Tamil Nadu Assembly elections.

The conference deliberated on the party ideology, firmed up its understanding with the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and launched an offensive against the enemies it identified.

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have been the victims of Tamil militancy. An injustice cannot be rectified by another. Deliberate killings of Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim civilians by the government forces and Tamil militants have been a barbaric feature of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. It has not in any way contributed to ending the conflict and the attendant miseries but only to prolong them.

Conclusion

From the above exposition, it follows that the settlement of the ethnic conflict by force is counterproductive to the ultimate goal of ensuring lasting peace in Sri Lanka. Nor the creation of an independent state of Tamil Eelam through the ongoing armed struggle will help to achieve this goal. On the contrary, these methods will only perpetuate forever the state of belligerence between different ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. Many beliefs and distrusts that have contributed to the ethnic conflict persist by default and counterproductive actions of past and present governments, only to be exploited by those interested in continuing the war.

Even though good intentions were expressed by the present government before and immediately after the last two national elections and on which high hopes were pinned by the Tamil

It declared that the CPI(M) and the MDMK would wage a joint battle to throw out the 'corrupt' Governments of P.V. Narasimha Rao at the Centre and Jayalalitha in the State, fight the communal forces represented by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and stoutly oppose the 'ruinous' new economic policy of the Centre.

General Secretary V. Gopalsamy declared that 'Jayalalitha is the Number One political enemy of the MDMK' and that his topmost priority 'was to fight her corrupt Government'. He assured CPI(M) general secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet, who was a special invitee, that 'We shall never form opportunistic alliances' and that 'we will never align ourselves with the Congress'.

At the conference, the MDMK asserted that it had not compromised

people to end their sufferings, they have been left to feel that nothing has been offered and nothing will change. This is unfortunate, particularly in the light of the euphoria that prevailed among the suffering Tamil people following President Kumaratunga's victory last year in the two elections. The recent military offensive claimed by the Government to be directed against the LTTE and not against the Tamil people, cannot be substantiated by the heavy civilian casualties. The peace groups quite rightly think that the credibility of the government among the Tamils is being destroyed and have called for an immediate halt to the offensive and to release its long-awaited peace package devolving power (extensively) to meet the Tamil demand for autonomy. Its release is reported to have been postponed by two more weeks from Government's own end-of-July deadline. Any further postponement will undermine its credibility and implementation (assuming its acceptance by the grieved party), damaging the integrity of President Kumaratunga's government. In this unfortunate event, the beliefs and suspicions that sustained the violent conflict will be reinforced further, destroying any hopes of an amicable settlement of the conflict and the return of peace in the foreseeable future to the previously acclaimed paradise on earth.

on the basic tenets of the Dravidian movement: State autonomy, opposition to Hindi imposition, social justice (reservation) and primacy to Tamil in the State. If there were expectations that the MDMK would keep a low profile on the sensitive issue of support to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the latter's fight for 'a separate Tamil Eelam', they were belied. The conference concluded that the formation of Eelam alone would solve the 'Tamil nationality question' in Sri Lanka. The party asserted it had 'every right to raise its voice in support of Sri Lankan Tamils'.

Gopalsamy outlined the party's ideology in a few quick strokes: 'We have given up separatism, but not the basic principles of Anna (C.N. Annadurai, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam founder). Our goal is State autonomy. There should be a thorough review of the Constitution as demanded by Anna. Powers should be devolved to the States. Article 356 of the Constitution (which empowers the Centre to dismiss State Governments) should be deleted from the Constitution. All the languages listed in the Eighth Schedule should be made official languages. Tamil, a classical language, should be first made an official language. We are committed to social justice. We are opposed to the new economic policy. We will join hands with the CPI(M) and stand shoulder to shoulder with it to fight the communal forces and the corrupt governments of Narasimha Rao and Jayalalitha. We will raise our voice if Tamils are attacked anywhere in the world'.

Surjeet, who attended the conference on the inaugural day, answered skeptics who asked what was common between the CPI(M) and the MDMK: 'What is not common between the CPI(M) and the MDMK?' He said the issues on which the two parties would fight together were: the new economic policy which was designed to 'mortgage the independence of the country to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund by serving the interests of monopoly houses and multinational companies', the rampant corruption at the Centre and the 'dark' communal forces. 'These are issues confronting the nation. We have a common approach on them and that is why we have come together. We have common enemies at the national and State levels. We are fighting against the Congress and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (of Jayalalitha). Our enemies are common and the issues are common. This lays the basis for sound cooperation. What else is required?' Surjeet said.

Tamil Nadu secretary of the CPI(M),

N. Sankariah, who too attended the conference on the inaugural day, said both the parties were 'working on the basis of equality of status'. 'We accept that the MDMK has emerged as a big force and it has its own ideology. So has the CPI(M). Both the parties believe in joint action. We have already taken part in many joint agitations. The CPI(M) is fighting to establish socialism. Gopalsamy has made it clear that the MDMK is not for separatism. Both the CPI(M) and the MDMK are together on the issues of equality of languages, State autonomy and strengthening India's integrity.

The conference was refreshingly different from similar events of other parties. There were only two cut-outs, of Periyar (E.V. Ramasami, pioneer of the Dravidian movement) and Annadurai, on either side of the huge pandal, and none of Gopalsamy. And the massive procession on June 30 was an unambiguous declaration of where the party's strength lay: the youth.

Enthusiastic young men and women marched for hours, holding aloft giant party flags and raising slogans in praise of the general secretary and condemning the 'corrupt' Jayalalitha Government. Banners announced the MDMK's credo: integrity in politics, honesty in public life and firmness in principles. There were also banners welcoming 'our comrade Harkishan Singh Surjeet', who witnessed the procession from a dais with Gopalsamy. A highlight of the procession, which took 12 hours to cross a point, was the 37 floats - tracing the growth of the Dravidian movement, proclaiming the party's ideology, ridiculing and excoriating the Jayalalitha regime, and so on.

Impressed by the massive mobilisation, Surjeet said at the inaugural, 'It was not a crowd hired by the Government. Ninety per cent of them were youth. One was able to see their great enthusiasm. They want to see a change in society. I can understand their feelings. They have been disappointed with the earlier leadership. They have reposed confidence in the MDMK and Gopalsamy. It is your (Gopalsamy's) responsibility to see that their aspirations are not belied and you have to fight in defence of people's interests'.

The MDMK was born amidst bitter controversy. In October 1993, the simmering feud in the DMK burst into the open after party president M. Karunanidhi said: 'the Government of India had come across unconfirmed information that the LTTE has plans to eliminate you (Karunanidhi) in order to promote the interests of Mr. V. Gopal-

samy'. A distraught Gopalsamy, a top-ranking leader of the party, rallied support for himself by asking, 'What have I done to the party to be branded a traitor and a murderer?'

What irritated the DMK high command was that Gopalsamy was attracting huge crowds, especially the youth, with his fiery oratory. His popularity among the cadres was reportedly not to the liking of Karunanidhi's sons M.K. Stalin and M.K. Azhagiri and nephew 'Murasoli' Maran. After a stand-off, the DMK expelled Gopalsamy on November 11, 1993 alleging he had acted contrary to party decisions and violated discipline. Several district secretaries left the DMK protesting against the expulsion. They, together with Gopalsamy, founded the MDMK on May 6, 1994.

With the first State conference coming just a year after its founding, the party was keen that it should prove its mettle. Besides, MDMK leaders were nettled by the accusation by Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president Kumari Ananthan and other leaders that the MDMK was 'receiving money from across the seas' and also the AIADMK to conduct the conference. MDMK treasurer Kannappan said the party had raised funds for the conference through its village, panchayat union, town and district level units and proper accounts were maintained. Loud cheers broke out when he said it was 'inhuman' to allege that LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran had provided money. Prabhakaran himself needed money to sustain his struggle, Kannappan argued. Chairman L. Ganesan too objected to Kumari Ananthan's accusation.

Gopalsamy, referring to questions such as how the district units could collect big funds and whether the MDMK could furnish accounts for these, said these units had collected Rs. 1.6 crore and Rs. 64 lakh was spent on the conference. The remaining Rs. 52 lakh was handed over to the party headquarters. He asked the Congress leadership, 'Why did it not bring legislation to audit the accounts of political parties? I am prepared to accept such legislation'.

A massive crowd had waited patiently for hours on July 2 to listen to Gopalsamy. It was around 2-15 a.m. on July 3 when he took the mike. A major portion of his two-hour, emotional speech was devoted to asserting the MDMK's right to 'raise its voice' in support of the Sri Lankan Tamils' cause.

Gopalsamy later explained to reporters why he highlighted the Sri Lankan Tamils' issue and what had compel-

led the conference to pass a resolution that 'a separate Eelam' alone was the solution to the ethnic crisis. 'The situation today warrants this resolution. Powerful forces are working against the Eelam Tamils. The situation in Sri Lanka, the moves of the Governments of India and the U.S. (to help Colombo) and the clever designs of the Chandrika (Kumaratunga) Government warrant our support to the Tamil Eelam cause. If we fail in this, posterity will not forgive us. Besides, there was criticism that I will be silent on the Tamils' issue. So I had to come out. . . Chandrika is more cunning than J.R. Jayewardene because she has succeeded in giving an impression to the world that she is all for peace. Simultaneously, she is strengthening her war machinery. Besides, has she revealed her peace package?'

Gopalsamy focussed attention also on the Centre's new economic policy and the 'corruption in high places' in the AIADMK Government. He pointed out that after the adoption of the new economic policy, the percentage of people below the poverty line had increased from 37 to 41.1. The policy had made the poor poorer. He wondered whether the Prime Minister was inventing developmental schemes to enable multinationals to swindle the country. 'The new economic policy will send India to the grave. We oppose India being pledged to the IMF and the World Bank', he added and asked, 'Did the Congress establish a socialist pattern of society as dreamt by Nehru?'

He accused Jayalalitha of 'looting government property' and going on a spree of buying private property. 'Many people spoke here of the corrupt Narasimha Rao Government. Some entertain the hope that the Jayalalitha Government, which is the fountainhead of corruption, will be dismissed by the Centre. But why was A.K. Banerjee, the Deputy Director of Enforcement Directorate in Madras, transferred? Did you (Narasimha Rao) transfer him because there was a phone call from Poes Garden (Jayalalitha's Madras residence)?' he asked.

The conference passed 82 resolutions without discussion. Deputy general secretary Pon. Muthuramalingam said the important ones, on State autonomy, social justice, opposition to Hindi imposition and solidarity with the Sri Lankan Tamils' cause, had already been discussed in the executive and administrative committees.

The resolutions attacked the Centre for its economic policy and the Tamil Nadu Government for the breakdown

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of law and order. The one on the Jayalalitha Government's 'corruption' was the longest, running to five pages. Through another resolution, the party demanded meaningful autonomy and genuine devolution of powers to the States to protect the 'various nationalities, their languages and culture' in the Indian Union. All those subjects transferred from the State List to the Concurrent List after 1950 should be restored to the States. 'The Centre has been duping' Tamil Nadu from 1947. 'Many development schemes had not been sanctioned to Tamil Nadu... Only a full-fledged federal set-up and the blossoming of State autonomy will ensure the integrity of the country'.

Another resolution wanted the Constitution to be amended to enable the States to fix their own quota of reservation. Yet another wanted Tamil as a medium of instruction in schools and colleges and also the genuine implementation of Tamil as the official language of the State.

The conference demanded that the Governor permit the MDMK to prosecute Jayalalitha under the Indian Penal Code for corruption. 'All the properties acquired by Jayalalitha, her female companion, Ministers and ruling party men by means of corruption and bribery should be confiscated', it said.

Surjeet told reporters it was difficult to say where there was more corruption, in New Delhi or Madras. 'In consonance with the position we have taken against criminalisation of politics and corruption, we have to fight against the AIADMK. The AIADMK cannot be different from the Congress. It supports the Congress' economic policies', he said. He pointed out that when the National Integration Council met on November 23, 1992, Jayalalitha 'openly' supported demolition of the Babri Masjid and construction of a temple there.

Whether the AIADMK would align itself with Narasimha Rao's Congress or the BJP would depend on 'decisions in New Delhi', Surjeet said. He ac-

cused the DMK of vacillating on the question of its alliance' and waiting 'for the final decision of New Delhi'. Jayalalitha's efforts to join the National Front also depended on the decision in New Delhi. 'Our opposition to the AIADMK will remain whether it joins the National Front or not', he said.

Sankariah pointed out that bribery, rape, corruption and lock-up deaths had become rampant in Tamil Nadu. 'Jayalalitha cannot wash her sins by joining the National Front. If the National Front admits the AIADMK, the CPI(M) will have no truck with the National Front as far as Tamil Nadu is concerned', he said. He challenged Karunanidhi to announce that the DMK would not ally with the 'corrupt' Narasimha Rao Congress.

The two parties have decided to picket jointly Central and State Government offices on August 9 to fight the new economic policy, expose the 'atrocities' taking place in Tamil Nadu and demand that civic polls be held in the State.

(Courtesy of *Frontline*, 28.7.95).

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on-going ethnic conflict in the north-east of the island. I can justifiably say that the international community has turned favourably on the Sri Lankan stance particularly of the peace initiatives of President Chandrika Kumaratunga. To that extent the LTTE is at a disadvantage in terms of international thinking.

And particularly our relations with India have reached an extremely warm and friendly phase all to the good.

Q: There have been reports that you are considering banning the LTTE. Is this correct?

A: We are certainly contemplating that. We are looking at legislative ways of doing that but no decision has been taken.

Q: In the context of the controversy over renewing diplomatic ties with Israel what have you decided?

A: What we have done as any Foreign Ministry does all the time is review foreign policy options with regard to the various countries. No decision will be taken until we have consulted all the parties, both domestic and foreign parties. There is an anti-Israel lobby in the country and I have heard that about 65 MPs have signed a memorandum but I have not seen it.

Q: You said in a recent interview that

the international community was well aware that there had to be a bout of fighting with the LTTE to force them to the negotiating table. Was operation 'Leap Forward' that bout of fighting you spoke of, or is there more to come?

A: The LTTE by unilaterally breaking the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement on April 19, made it clear to us that they had resorted to the option of war. It would appear that its aim is to establish a state of Eelam in the north and east. The government had to respond to that, and our response has been to oppose that. The bout of fighting was inevitable because no government can take an assault on it, lying down.

It may have a beneficial result for we hope that the fighting will bring home to the LTTE that it cannot achieve its objectives by war. The international community recognises the inevitability of the situation. They do not blame us for reacting militarily. Whether it is the only bout of fighting, and whether there is more to come is a military question although it has political implications too.

Q: Has there been a negative fall-out because of the civilian casualties of operation 'Leap Forward'?

A: As to the so-called bombing of the Naval Church in Jaffna we don't know what really happened. As to a negative fall-out yes. But no right-

thinking person will say it was deliberate and of course when there are civilian casualties there is a hue and cry. If it was an accident by the government we are deeply sorry. It can be said that for the first time in recent years that the government has been bent on reconciliation with the Tamil people. President Chandrika Kumaratunga has a spotless record of her concern for the Tamil people.

Q: On the extradition of LTTE leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran has any headway been made, and is there a timeframe?

A: The Attorney General is going through a very big dossier handed over by India to see whether there is a *prima facie* case against Mr. Prabhakaran. The government does not come into the picture until advised by our legal authorities. There is no timeframe.

Q: Personally what has this year in politics meant to you.

A: My lifestyle has changed dramatically with an onerous lot of responsibilities which I take very seriously. And I have become a prisoner of security considerations. But on the plus side I take heart that I have been able to contribute in some way to some of the urgent problems of our time. When I decided to enter politics it was because I wanted to put something into the society from which I gained much.

READERS FORUM

MISSING CLAUSES IN THE NEW CONTRACT

THE MUCH publicised plea 'For a New Social Contract' signed by a number of intellectuals (*Tamil Times*, July '95) in its attempts to apportion blame between Sinhala nationalists and the LTTE for the failure of the parties concerned to bring the war to an end has failed to recognize some important facts and refuses to accept some basic principles that are essential to the peaceful resolution of the national question.

What has been rather conveniently forgotten is the credibility of the PA Government. This government which was given a massive mandate in the Presidential election of 1994 did not take too long to go back on every one of its important promises. It let down the workers when they stood for their rights, began to threaten the media by using methods not too unfamiliar to us in the recent past, reimposed or continued the ban on the transport of several essential goods to the north, and has been responsible for the bombing of public places.

Unidentifiably mutilated bodies found floating in water, not long ago, have reminded us of the days of the Premadasa regime when at least 50,000 young men fell victim to state terror. That machinery of repression is still intact, despite the change in government. The government even tried to ban May Day rallies while the VOA got its green light. It is no wonder that the IMF and the World Bank love this PA socialism with Sri Lankan characteristics. The PA has been unswerving in its loyalty to the comprador elite establishment and that is one promise that the President has kept, namely the one to the Chamber of Commerce that she will not upset the applecart.

The authors of the appeal, by portraying the LTTE and the Sinhala chauvinists as the representatives of the two extremist positions on the national question, are distorting the picture through ignoring the role of the PA Government. The government remains the aggressor and oppressor while it allows the armed forces to continue to drive civilians from their homes and bomb and shell civilian targets. The government forces still act like an army of occupation. No-

thing has happened to change this and the PA Government was more keen on 'winning friends and influencing people' among potential allies overseas in its war to defeat the LTTE than in taking serious steps towards a peaceful solution. The President's indiscreet utterances in India a few months ago lacked statesmanship and her recent actions have disillusioned many of those who had pinned their hopes on her for a peaceful resolution of the national question, the restoration of democratic rights and the reversal of the foreign and economic policies of the past seventeen years.

The appeal seems to defend the right of the state to make reasonable military responses to 'LTTE aggression'. One may suppose that since the term 'reasonable' is rather woolly, this is a licence for the state to define its own reasonable responses against LTTE aggression'.

The other claims that the LTTE defines peace as Eelam remains to be proven, since, so far, no government in the south has come out with any solution that will be acceptable to the majority of the Tamil nationality or acted in a way that inspires confidence in the government. There has been no truly Sri Lankan party in the country since independence, except for the left parties, until their disintegration following the surrender of the LSSP and the pro-Soviet CP to the SLFP between 1963 and 1970. The UNP, despite its 'multi-ethnic' character in 1947-57, had a Sinhala chauvinist agenda. The SLFP made no pretences about its Sinhala nationalism. Every member of minority nationality in the Sri Lankan government was a junior partner who had to accept primacy of the Sinhala nationalist (and later Sinhala-Buddhist) interests.

I am not a defender of the LTTE's acts of violence against other nationalities nor do I approve of the lack of democracy in the north. Like in the case of the JVP, the actions of an oppressive government have to bear much of the blame for the creation of such circumstances. The appeal fails miserably in this respect. I suspect that this failure is a result of an underlying faith in the minds of a majority of signatories that the PA Government still has the intention and ability to deliver a peaceful solution.

The terminology used by the authors to describe the national question is designed to negate the fact that the immediate issue concerns two nationalities. The use of terms like ethnic-conflict and multi-ethnic society and the reference to nationalism more as a

concept than as something existing in relation to the reality of a Tamil nation that has emerged as a consequence of national oppression is not surprising in the context of the rejection of the right to self-determination on the basis of traditional homelands. They even argue that the notion of self-determination and the exclusivity of the traditional homeland as essential and indispensable prefixes for the resolution of the national question is archaic and redundant. It makes one wonder whether their proposal is serious at all about a just and lasting solution. The notion of exclusivity of a traditional homeland can be seen by some as a kind of principle that will lead to ethnic cleansing. But this need not be the case and should certainly not be if there is to be lasting peace.

The fact remains that traditional Tamil and Muslim regions have been systematically and intentionally colonised, even using the argument of a multi-ethnic nation, to reduce the Tamil and Muslim people to a minority in their regions and to deprive the Tamil people of a geographically contiguous territory. It was this experience that makes the Tamil people insist on the recognition of their traditional homelands. I find it hard to understand the signatories' fear of the notion of self-determination. They advocate autonomy without self-determination. This perhaps is a result of their equating the right to secession with the act of secession itself.

While I admire the sentiments of the authors of the document in relation to a truly multi-ethnic state, I regret to note that Sri Lanka has gradually ceased to be a multi-ethnic society since the ascent of Sinhala chauvinism. The events since 1977, and especially after 1983, have led the Tamil people to feel that they are a nation, or at least not part of a Sri Lankan nation whose identity had become increasingly Sinhala Buddhist. So, for the present, Sri Lanka can at best, be a state representing several nationalities. But a just solution could bring the people closer and lead to the emergence of a truly multi-ethnic society. That is for some distant, or hopefully near-distant future.

What amazed me most was that the authors of the document consider Canada, South Africa, India, Nigeria and Malaysia (emphasis mine), to be among societies which have tried and tested policies aimed at accepting devolution, difference and diversity. Perhaps we read different newspapers.

S. Sivasegaram,

London SW20.

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WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Sivanathan son of the late Mr. & Mrs. Visuvanther and Shanthini daughter of the late Mr. & Mrs. Nagiah at Great Hall, Bromley Civic Centre, Kent on 20.8.95.

Janakan son of late Mr. Balasingam and Mrs. Kanthimathy Balasingam of 8A Ellsworth Street, Somerville, Mass. 01245, USA and Charumathi daughter of Mr. & Mrs. N. Wijayaharan of 33 Park Circle, Rochester NY 14623, USA on 19.8.95 at India Community Centre, Penfield, New York.

OBITUARIES



Mr. Ponnampalam Sripathmanathan, Electronic Engineer, Leica Cambridge Ltd., U.K., beloved husband of Maheswari; loving father of Sivahami and Ramanan; son of the late Mr. V. Ponnampalam and Mrs. Pooranam Ponnampalam of Thirunelvely, Jaffna; brother of Yogasundaram,

Sathiamoorthy and Rajagopal; brother-in-law of Dr. (Mrs.) Jegatheswary Somasundarajah, Kuhanendran, Dr. (Mrs.) Nimalleswary Vamadevan, Dr. Balendran, Dr. Vipulendran and the late Sivanendran passed away on 27.6.95 and was cremated at Mortlake Crematorium, London SW14 - 154 Wills Crescent, Hounslow, Middx. Tel: 0181 898 7578.



Mr. Arulampalam Kumaraguru, Retired Registered Medical Practitioner, Sri Lanka; formerly of 19 Suvu Suddharma Road, Colombo 6; beloved husband of Sivahamasunthery, Retired teacher, Isaipathana Junior School, Colombo 4; loving father of Gowrie Baii (Madras) Kumaresan (Canada); father-in-law of Karunaharan and Sankavai; loving grandfather of Prahalathan, Parathan and Seyanthan passed away on 24.6.95 and cremation took place in Toronto.

The members of the family thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral and sent messages of sympathy. - Unit 101, 250 John Garland Blvd., Rexdale, Ontario M9V 1N8, Canada. Tel: (416) 742 4944.

Sinnathamby Saravanamuttu of Maviddapuram, Kollankalady, Tellipalai, Veterinary Surgeon and formerly Superintendent Colombo Municipality Slaughter House, husband of late Marahathavalli, brother of late Sangarapillai and late Kandiah, father of late Rajaluxmy, Sundari and Dr. Thanaluxmy father-in-law of late Maheswaran, Kandiah and late Prof. Saravanapavanandan passed

away in Madras on 17th August '95. - 1161 Kotte Road, Rajagiriya, Sri Lanka.



Dr. J. Senathirajah FRCOG
Born: 26.09.44
Died: 24.03.95

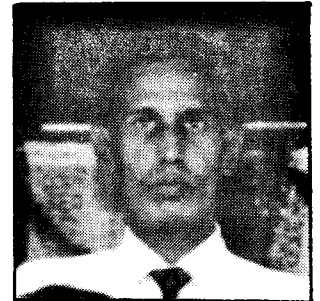
Dr. Jeyarajan Senathirajah (Airedale Hospital, Keighley), beloved husband of Dr. Manohari (Burley-in-Wharfedale Hospital); loving father of Dushyanthan (Leeds University) and Carthiga (Leicester University); son of the late Mr. & Mrs. P.A. Senathirajah (of Somasundaram Avenue, Chundikuli) and son-in-law of the late Mr. T. Carthigesar and Mrs. Carthigesar (of I.B.C. Road, Wellawatte) passed away on 24th March 1995 and was cremated at a private funeral according to his wishes. Ashes will be interred in Jaffna at a later date. - 51 Thornhill Road, Steeton, Keighley, W. Yorks. BD20 6TN.



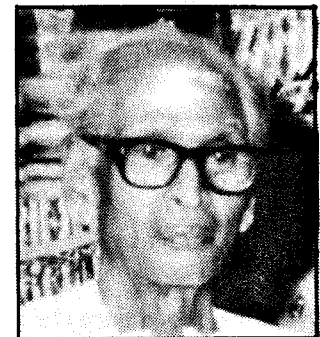
Mr. Thillainathan Manickavasagar, Retired Director of Education of Northern Region, Sri Lanka; beloved husband of Gnanambigai; loving father of Sarojini, Sri Krishnanathan, Dr. Shantha Nadarajah (Savunthala), Parimala (all of Canada), Susheela (UK) and Thillainathan (Canada); father-in-law of Sathiyananthan, Mala, Nadarajah (all of Canada) and Dr. Skelton Robinson (UK); grandfather of Subanan, Shibani, Subash Krishan, Manoj, Shaumiya, Umashanthi (Rebecca) all of Canada and James (UK) passed away peacefully on 12.6.95 in Toronto and was cremated at Highland Memorial Gardens, North York, Ontario, Canada on 15th June.

The members of the family thank all friends and relatives

who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and condoled with them during the time of great sorrow - 57 Parkwood Village Drive, Apt. 506, North York, Ontario M3A 2X2, Canada. Tel: 416 510 0985.



Vaithilingam Jeyaratnam, beloved youngest son of the late Mr. Alfred Vaithilingam and Mrs. Nagulambigai Vaithilingam of Erlalai South, Sri Lanka, brother of Mrs. Gunayagam, the late Navaratnam, Gunaratnam and Mrs. Muthiah (all of Sri Lanka), Thavaratnam (Australia), Jebaratnam (UK) and Mrs. Jebaraj (Sri Lanka) passed away on 09.08.95 in Erlalai. A memorial service will be held on 10.09.95 at Hammersmith Methodist Church, UK, at 3.30pm.



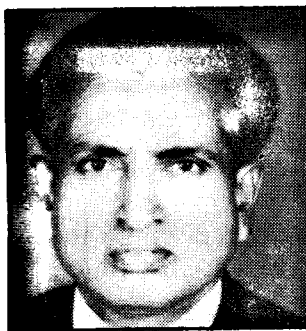
Mr. R.N. Sivapragasam, Attorney-at-Law; Editor Hindu Organ and Inthusathanam; ex-President, Saiva Paripalana Sabai; brother of the late Mr. R.N. Sivasambo, Journalist and Mrs. Sathiwathy Nadarajah; brother-in-law of the late Senator Nadarajah, Attorney-at-Law; loving father of Mr. Sriharan, Attorney-at-Law, (Canada), Mr. Kengatharan (Mallakam, Sri Lanka) and Mrs. Ketharagowrie Balasubramaniam (UK); father-in-law of Mrs. Gnanasakthi Sriharan, Mrs. Kailanayaki Kengatharan and Mr. Balasubramaniam; grandfather of Sivasoruban, Yamalai, Gowlini and Premasoruban (all of Canada), Rudrarubini and Sivapragasam (Mallakam) and Vidyaharan (UK) passed away peacefully on 5th August 1995. The funeral took place on 6th August. - Mallakam, Sri Lanka.

IN MEMORIAM



In everloving memory of Mrs. Sushila Jayaratnam who passed away on 14.7.91.

Sorrowfully remembered by husband Jayam; daughters Kalyani, Tharani and Sumanthini; son-in-law Kanakendran and sisters Kamala and Indra. - P.O. Box 174, Gaborone, Botswana.



Mr. Mayilvaganam Velummayilum, J.P., U.M., Attorney-at-law and former Chairman,

Urban Council, Point Pedro, Sri Lanka passed away on 31.8.89 and the sixth anniversary of his demise falls on 31.8.95.

Sadly missed by his loving wife, children Thayanandarajah (UK), Nithyanandarajah (New Zealand), Mayilvaganarajah (UK), Chitra, Anandarajah, Krishnarajah and Jayanthi (all of Sri Lanka); grandson Cameron; in-laws, relatives, friends and a host of grateful constituents - 59 Edgwarebury Gardens, Edgware, Middx. HA8 8LL.



In loving memory of Mr. Apputhurai Gunaratnam of Point Pedro, Sri Lanka, formerly Divisional Superintendent of Post Offices, Sri Lanka on the fifth anniversary of his passing away on 28.8.90.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his loving wife Rani; children Thirukumaran (Australia), Vasuki (Sri Lanka), Devaki (Australia), Sutharsan (UK) and Saratha Devi (Sri Lanka); daughter-in-law Vasanthi; son-in-law Radhakrishnan; grand daughter Mayurica; sister and in-laws - 67B St. Ann's Road, London N15 6NJ. Tel: 0181 802 5601.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

September 2 6.45pm Tamil Orphans' Trust presents Natyanjali by the students of Mrs. Uma Chandratheva at Acton Town Hall, High Street, London W3. Tel: 0181 908 3540/482 7745.

Sept. 3 Aavani Moolam.

Sept. 5 Eekathasi.

Sept. 6 Pirathosam.

Sept. 8 Full Moon; Feast of Birthday of Our Lady Mary.

Sept. 14 Feast of the Triumph of the Cross.

Sept. 15 Feast of Our Lady Mary of Sorrows.

Sept. 16 Feast of St. Cornelius.

Sept. 17 12 noon Skanda Varodaya College O.S.A. Tenth Annual Reunion Lunch, Variety Entertainment and A.G.M. Tel: 0181 644 0972/881 6741/651 5263.

Sept. 17 6.45pm Lakshmi Art Centre and S.C.O.T. present an evening of Bharatha Natyam

at Watersmeet Theatre, High Street, Rickmansworth in Aid of Relief and Rehabilitation in North and East Sri Lanka. Tel: 0181 904 6472/248 0512.

Sept. 20 Eekathasi.

Sept. 21 Feast of St. Mathew.

Sept. 22 Pirathosam.

Sept. 23 First Purattasi Sani; 6.30pm Saivi Munnetta Sangam presents Drama and Dance at Langdon School Hall, Sussex Road, East Ham, London E6 2PS. Tel: 01268 766624.

Sept. 24 Amavasai.

Sept. 27 Feast of St. Vincent de Paul.

Sept. 28 Sathurthi; Navaraththiri Festival Starts.

Sept. 29 Feast of St.s Michael, Gabriel and Raphael.

Sept. 30 Second Purattasi Sani; Saraswathy Poojah starts; 6.30pm Bharatha Natyam Arangetram of Miss Domatilla Arulmoli Sivagunam, disciple of Smt Pathmini Gunaseelan at Lloyds Park Theatre, Winns Terrace, Forest Road, London E17.

At Bhawan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 0171-381 3086/4608.

Sept. 9 2.00pm to 6.30pm Seminar on Indian Renaissance.

Sept. 30 Bharatha Natyam Recital by Gita Cambow.

Tamil Orphans' Trust Thanks Sudha Ragunathan



Smt Sudha Ragunathan, a top ranking Carnatic Musician from South India and an active supporter of the Tamil Orphans' Trust in UK visited London recently to present three well attended vocal recitals in aid of the Trust. Picture above shows a

trophy being presented to her by Mr. Wimal Sockanathan, Solicitor, Broadcaster and Past President of the Trust. Looking on is Mr. Pon Theivendran, the current President.

The Tamil Orphans' Trust, a UK registered Charity formed in 1988 after the turmoil in the North and East of Sri Lanka has a well supported fund raising activity efficiently supplemented by distribution to the needy orphans. For details telephone 0181 908 3540/422 0012.

World Hindu Conference in South Africa

Decades of isolation of South African Hindus was brought to an end by the inauguration of the World Hindu Conference in Durban from 7th to 10th July 1995. Swami Siva Nandhi Adikalaar, Secretary of the World Saiva Council from London gave the keynote speech on 'The Harmony of Science and Saiva Siddantha Philosophy'. He expounded on the essence of the Upanishads which portrayed the meaning of the Hindu way of life. Among the other speakers were Swami Pranavananda, Acharya Rameshwar Das and Swami Purnananda from Mauritius, Acharya Omanath Sharma from Nepal, Rukmini from RSS Bangalore, Sadhu Ran-

garajan from India, Swami Bhakti Tirtha from USA and Dr. Laxmi Kumari from Tamil Nadu.

Over 35,000 gathered at the Chatsworth Stadium in Durban for the rally on the final day - 10th July. President Nelson Mandela was the Chief Guest.

Somu and His Boys

Under the banner of Sruthi Laya, Soma-sundara Desikar presented on 12th August, a lively evening of rhythm by his thirty odd young mridangam students at Rutlish School Hall, London SW20. Arranged in five progressive groups they displayed their skill with dedication. Some of them played to accompany their Guru. Violin and orchestral items by invited artistes added colour.

Among the mridangam students one could not suppress amazement at the performance of young Balaji Krishnamurthy whose vidwan - like pose, digital perfection and rhythmic control mesmerised every one. Here is a rising star. Among the invited artistes young brothers, Karthik and Kumar Ragunathan, displayed remarkable handling of the violin with attractive gamaka variations, a tribute to

Continued on page 32

Continued from page 31

their guru Dr. Lakshmi Jayan. The orchestra was led by Malini Thanabalasingam on her veena. It was a convivial meeting of artistes, like Sivarajah, Bangalore Prakash, Kirubhakaran, Chidambaranathan, Kothandapani and Gnanavarathan all helping Somu.

(S.S.S.)

Kalaivani Indrakumar Honoured



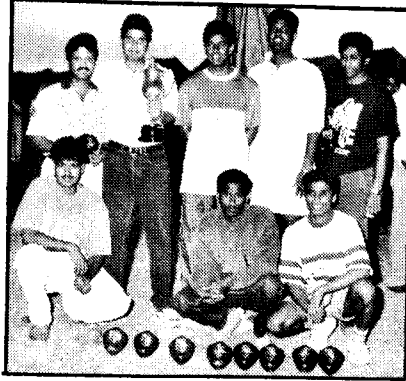
Smt Kalaivani Indrakumar, the well-known carnatic violin teacher and Director of Natha Vidyalaya was 'draped in a golden shawl' and honoured by Smt Sudha Ragnathan, famous Carnatic Vocalist from South India at a well attended function held at Wembley High School Hall, East Lane, Wembley on 8.7.95.

Addressing the gathering present she said, 'I cannot believe what I have seen this evening, so many thousands of miles away from my home. It seems that I am back in India enjoying the music from the tiny tots from the junior group to those in the senior group and from Bhayiravi Ganeshwaran, the pride of Natha Vidyalaya, whose melodious music filled this auditorium to the great enjoyment of all of us. I can see that the sincere service rendered by your teacher Kalaivani is the pulse that is beating in Natha Vidyalaya, helping this illustrious seat of learning to attain great heights. I greatly appreciate the laudable efforts made by parents who in the midst of their busy schedule find the time, energy and money and above all provide the encouragement to keep the flag of carnatic music flying high as ever. I consider it a great privilege to have had this opportunity to honour a great teacher'.

Old Centralites J.S.S.A. (U.K) Cricket Champions 1995

The J.S.S.A. (UK) had their Fourth Annual Cricket and Netball Festival on 29th July 1995. Excellent weather favoured the proceedings which were well attended by the old students and supporters of the participants. Jaffna Central College annexed this

year's cricket championship. A picture of the champion team appears below.



The Over 40 Cricket Tournament was an innovation this year and the Old Wesleyites were the champions. Jaffna Hindu Ladies College Old Girls won the Netball Championship after defeating Chundikuli Old Girls, the reigning champions, in a well contested match.

The association had a very successful raffle sponsored by Skylink Travel Ltd. Most of the tickets were sold by the participating Old Students Organisations to whom half the proceeds of the sale were paid back. The first prize of a return air ticket to Colombo by courtesy of Skylink Travel Ltd was won by ticket No. 5979. The third prize of a return air ticket to Paris by courtesy of abc Letting and Management was won by ticket No. 8060.

Vathanee's Debut

The Bharatha Natya Debut of Vathanee, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Srinivasan of North Cheam, Surrey took place at the Grand Hall, Battersea Town Hall, London SW11 on 5.8.95. Vathanee is a disciple of Smt Vinothini Shanmuganathan, a student of Shantha Ponnudurai of Jaffna and Adayer Sri Luxmanan of Bharata Choodamani, Madras.



Vathanee performed the usual items needed for an Arangetram and excelled in

the Varnam which is the central and the most challenging item of a Bharata Natya repertoire. The Varnam in Raga Valayi gave much scope for bhava and natya. Her stage personality was a plus point. The padams were beautifully rendered by the vocalist Smt Ambika Thamoheram. The other accompanists were Smt Vinothini Shanmuganathan - Nattuvangam, Sri Muthu Sivaraja - Mirdangam, Sri L. Kothandapani - Violin, Sri P. Gnanavarathan - Flute and Sri K. Sithamparanathan - Morsing.

Thiruvalluvar Statue For London

A bronze statue of the Tamil savant Thiruvalluvar is to be erected in London on the campus of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. The 5 foot 3 inches tall statue weighing about half a ton would soon be shipped to London. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Ms. Jayalalitha had sanctioned Rs. 2.75 Lakhs for making the statue following a request from the School of Oriental and African Studies, and an additional Rs. 1 Lakh for sending the statue by cargo flight.

CANADIAN NEWS LETTER

Dharshini Dances to Aid Temples in Canada

Kumari Dharshini Gandhi, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. K. Gandhi of Harrow, UK, and disciple of Dr. Smt Kanchana Shivalingam, gave two Bharata Natyam recitals in aid of temples in Alberta, Canada.



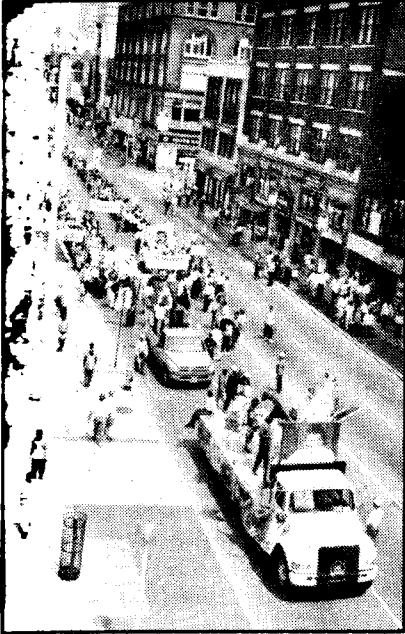
The performance on August 12th, '95 was at the Public Library Auditorium, Edmonton in aid of The Maha Ganapathy Society and the second on August 13th, '95 was at The University of Calgary Auditorium in aid of The Sri Murugan Society of Calgary.

The residents of Alberta were pleased with Dharshini's kind gesture and brilliant performances.

The orchestra consisted of: Nattuvangam - Dr. Smt Kanchana Shivalingam (Edmonton), Vocal - Smt Ambika Thamotheeram, (London), Mirdangam - Sri R.G. Rajanna (Calgary), Flute - Dr. Sri V. Kumar (Calgary), Tabla - Sri S. Kalathar (Edmonton).

Demonstration in Toronto

As reported in the last issue the demonstration held in Toronto on 17.6.95 was well attended. A picture of it appears below.



Canadian Ceylon Tamils' Chamber of Commerce held their annual fair and exhibition on 12.8.95 at the North American Studio in Markham, Ontario. Over 100 businesses participated. It attracted over 10,000 visitors and was opened by Her Worship Barbara Hall, the Mayor of Toronto. This association is affiliated to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and spurs the activities of over 600 Tamil business and professional establishments in Ontario. Mr. S.K. Ariaratnam is the President of the Ceylon Tamils' Chamber and Dr. G.P. Jagatheeswaran is the Secretary and its executive director.

Continued from page 19

singhe said only two soldiers had been killed and 18 wounded.

The military said the navy also sank at least fifteen 'Sea Tiger' boats. Five of the vessels destroyed were water-jet propelled speedboats captured earlier by the Tigers from the navy. During the attack a missile was fired by the Tigers at an air force helicopter but missed the target, the army claimed. The assault was launched at Kokkutturwai, Jaysinghepura and Kokilai on the coast.

Senior Tamils' Centre of Ontario had their second weekend camp at Bolton, Ontario, as scheduled from July 21st to 23rd, and 75 persons participated. The Hindus and Christians took this opportunity to hold a joint prayer to commemorate those who died in the July '83 race riots in Sri Lanka. Enriched by the programmes such as line dancing and enthused with the camp fire experience and the exhilarating wagon rides, most of the participants were reluctant to leave the camp at the end of the programme. The next camp for families is from August 11th to 13th. The second Adult and Seniors Camp is scheduled for September 1st to 3rd, while the second Youth Camp is planned for October 20th to 23rd.

Caribana. The Annual Caribana Festival noted for its fun, fantastic music, flamboyant colour and fascinating dancing was celebrated in Toronto with a final parade on Saturday, 5th August. The festival is celebrated by the West Indian Community during the Civic Holiday weekend that falls at the end of the first week of August each year. This is perhaps the largest Caribbean festival in North America and is also the biggest inter-racial feast of Toronto. Tourists from all over the world flock to witness this festival of festivals.

Montreal Murugan Temple. The sod turning ceremony of the New Murugan Temple of Montreal was held on 18.6.95 in a small town on the outskirts of the City of Montreal. This was the culmination of 12 years of hard work by the Montreal Quebec Saiva Maha Sabai.

Seminar 'Our Heritage and Vision' The three day seminar scheduled for July 28th to 30th at Manitoba was postponed for a weekend in October. For further details please contact Friends of Eelam Inc., 6 Dalhousie Drive, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 2Y7. Tel: (204) 255 0800.

AUSTRALIAN NEWSLETTER

Abaya Karam, a charity organisation formed four years ago to help the north and east of Sri Lanka presented its annual concert on 29.7.95 at Bankstown Town Hall, Sydney to raise funds. The first half of the programme featured devotional music by the Sahaja Yogan Bhajan Group, an Odissi dance and a Siva Tandava dance by the students of Smt Damayanthi Balaraju who runs the Thillai Nadanalayam Dance School. The same dance school presented afterwards a Ramayana Dance Drama - Paathukaikku Or Anjali.

The Dance Drama as well as the other items were greatly appreciated by the large crowd present. Over \$8000 was raised from the concert and was equally divided between the Durgapuram Mahalir Illam, Tellipallai and the Ramakrishna Mission Orphanage, Batticaloa. Mr. K. Sivanathan, in his presidential address detailed the past fund raising activities of the organisation and its future plans. The vice-president Smt Devi Balasubramaniam while proposing the vote of thanks special-

ly thanked Smt Balaraju and her students for the hard work put in by them which had resulted in the enthusiastic response from the audience. The Guest of Honour at the concert was Rev. Pravrajika Ajayaprana Mataji of the Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Society.

Vembadi Old Girls' & Jaffna Central Old Boys' Association, Sydney met on 1.7.95 and decided to hold a dinner and a variety entertainment by invited artistes and old students of both schools on 14.10.95 to raise funds for both schools. They propose to publish a souvenir to mark the occasion and old students of both schools living both in and out of Australia are requested to contribute articles to the souvenir by contacting the Editor Mr. S. Dharmapalan whose address is 17 Katrina Street, Seven Hills, NSW 2147, Australia.

Temple Celebrations. Sri Venkateswara Temple, Helensburgh, New South Wales celebrated the 10th anniversary of its Maha Kumbabishekam, on a grand scale from Friday, 7th July to Sunday, 9th July. The special poojas and Homams commenced on Friday and continued throughout Saturday. On Sunday after special Abishekam and Alankaram for Sri Venkateswara, Mahalakshmi and Andal, there was Maha Deepadhi and Archanas. This was followed by Kalyana Utsavam and finally the Prakara Utsavam of the Utsava Murthies.

A large crowd of devotees was present on Sunday and the Deities were carried shoulder high on a specially made 'Thandikai' around the temple to the accompaniment of live Nathaswaram music.

Carnatic Music Recital: The newly formed Rasikapriya School of Indian Music had its inaugural concert on 30.7.95, at Wallace Theatre, University of Sydney, by Smt S. Sowmya.

Smt Sowmya is an A grade artiste of All India Radio and Dhoordharshan and was accompanied by the leading violinist Smt M. Narmada, daughter of the Violin Maestro M.S. Gopalakrishnan and on the Mridangam by Sri M.K. Balaji, a leading musician.

Smt Sowmya sang for nearly four hours to the delight of the audience. The tonal quality of her voice and the rendering of the music were remarkable.

Past Copies of Tamil Times

Past copies of Tamil Times are available for sale in 13 volumes, the present series being volume 14. The price of each volume is £25 by surface mail. The price for each volume in other currencies is: US\$45/Can\$50/Aus\$55. Australian dollar cheques should be drawn on Australian Banks only. Those interested are requested to send a cheque/- draft/money order in favour of Tamil Times Ltd to

The Circulation Manager, Tamil Times Ltd., P.O. Box 121, Sutton Surrey SM1 3TD, U.K.



Skanda Varodaya College Old Students' Association (UK Branch)

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5. Flute Recital by Mr K. Jananayagam
6. Violin Recital by Miss Bhayiravi Ganeshwaran
7. Light Songs by Mr. M. Sathiyamoorthy
8. Bharatha Natyam by Miss Mythily Sri Rajeskanthan
9. Bharatha Natyam by Miss Brintha Baladasan

Tickets: Family £12: Adult £5: Children under 12: £2

The Annual General Meeting will be held after
the Lunch & Variety Entertainment

*We look forward to the presence of all past students,
their families, their friends & well wishers of the College
on this important occasion*

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