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Sri Lankan troops advancing from Paranthan towards the LTTE stronghold of Kilinochchi resulting in large scale displacement of people.



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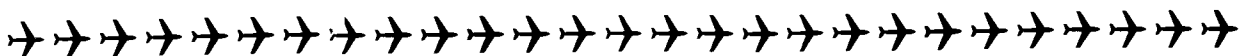
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"I do not agree with a ward
at what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it."

-Voltaire

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For Third Party Mediation

The slaughter of over 1400 soldiers in the recent assault by the LTTE upon the Mullaitivu camp and the loss of tens of millions of dollars worth of weapons was an unprecedented defeat for the Sri Lankan military. In fact, since World War II, this tragic episode must constitute a very rare instance of a military encounter in which such a large number of troops were killed in one single operation. In military and political terms as far as the LTTE is concerned, no one could dispute that its Mullaitivu operation was a great victory. Yet, even after several days of the Mullaitivu rout, which meant tragedy for the 1400 soldiers killed and their families, the Deputy Minister of Defence of the Sri Lankan government did not admit what had happened and the scale of the defeat, but was still talking about recapturing the non-existent camp which had already been destroyed by the Tigers.

The Jaffna peninsula was acknowledged by everyone as the stronghold of the LTTE where it had set up virtually an emergent mini-state with its headquarters, its administrative machinery and all its military and political structures. The military operations undertaken by the Sri Lankan government late last year and the early part of this year resulted in the LTTE leadership having to abandon its stronghold and move into the Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Vanni areas. The overwhelming majority of the civilian population were evacuated and displaced. The fall of the peninsula into the control of government forces accompanied by the hoisting of the national Lion Flag produced an euphoric response in the south of the island, and the government hailed it as a great victory over the Tigers. On the other hand, in an effort to deny what was in fact a major defeat, the LTTE described the fall of Jaffna as a pyrrhic victory for the military in capturing a ghost area with no people. Even some Christian clerics from the north went so far as to characterise the evacuation of the civilians from their homes as a 'Historic Exodus' of biblical proportions. Moses led his people into freedom from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land of Israel. For the people of Jaffna there was neither a Moses endowed with divine power nor did they go to the Promised Land. The reality of the present situation is that a substantial number of the civilian population have returned to the peninsula, and there are tens of thousands trapped in the Kilinochchi and Vanni areas yearning to return to their homes and they will do so only if there is a way.

The senselessness of the situation is that the parties to the conflict are seeking to portray even definite defeats as valiant victories! The distressing and dreadful scenario of the last several years has been victory today and defeat the next day for both parties and, as pointed out before in these columns, neither party possesses the required capability to inflict a decisive defeat upon the other, forcing a surrender and bringing an end to the conflict. This point was well made recently by a speaker at the recently held 'Peace with Justice' conference in Australia on the subject of Conflict in Sri Lanka: 'As long as both sides remain intransigent these sort of conflicts tend to continue. Both groups are locked in conflict that neither can win. The Sri Lankan military despite its recent success in the conquest of Jaffna has only managed to control a very small part of Jaffna and all that really happened was that the Tamil Tigers just faded into the jungles of the East to continue the struggle. The Government lacks the resources to be able to win the struggle. Similarly the Tigers also lack the resources to win the struggle. There is no way in which the Tigers are going to be able to defeat the Sri Lankan army and no way in which the Sri Lankan army is going to be able to defeat the Tamil Tigers.' (Dr. John Powers, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Asian Studies, Australian National University).

In this situation the conflict, which neither side can win, is dragging on while both sides are 'trying to exact as much retribution as they can from the other side and do as much damage as they can do to the other side.' In the meantime, it is the civilian population which suffers enormously.

In this situation, rational thinking would have prompted that assistance from an independent third party should be obtained in an effort to settle matters through negotiation. The LTTE has in recent statements made it know that it is willing to accept third party intervention to facilitate negotiations. The idea of a third party role cannot in principle be anathema to the government of Sri Lanka because it was President Kumaratunga, when she identified certain difficulties being encountered in the progress of talks between the government and the LTTE before the resumption of hostilities in April 1995, in a letter sent to the LTTE leader suggested a French mediator be brought in to play a helpful role in facilitating negotiations. It was unfortunate that the LTTE at that time declined to accept the President's suggestion. But what is relevant today is that the LTTE appears to have now recognised the need for third party mediation.

There are many independent individuals and organisations in the world who are well-wishers of Sri Lanka and all its people and who will only be too willing to play a role to provide their services to facilitate discussions between the conflicting parties. One hopes that the government and the LTTE have the capacity to realise that they are engaged in an unwinnable war which brings nothing but tragedy to all the people and seek third party mediation.

NEWS REVIEW

Pope Calls for Talks

Citing the "terrible atrocities" of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, Pope John Paul II called upon the parties in conflict to engage in negotiations to protect ethnic minorities in the South Asian country.

In a meeting with visiting Sri Lankan Bishops, the Pope praised the clerics for promoting peace in their country while emphasising that that there was no other course other negotiations to end the peoples' suffering.

In a statement from the Vatican dated 21 August, the Pope was reported

as saying, "I cannot pass over in silence the anxiety which you have expressed concerning the hardships and sufferings inflicted upon your people by the violence which continues to affect your beloved nation and by the terrible atrocities being committed," the Pope said.

"Negotiated settlement is the only way" to address the problems between the two sides, John Paul said. "Only dialogue can safeguard inviolable human rights, including the legitimate rights of minorities." □

Four Day Cease-fire

In an otherwise depressing situation as far as the continuing conflict in Sri Lanka is concerned, the announcement that the government and the LTTE have agreed a four-day cease-fire to enable an island-wide immunisation programme came as a welcome gesture.

The United Nations International Children Emergency FUND (UNICEF) is to undertake an anti-polio immunisation programme among children and appealed to the government and the LTTE to facilitate the conduct of this programme by ceasing to fight during the period.

The LTTE agreed on 4 September to four days of cease-fire in their fight against government forces to help implement an island-wide polio immunisation programme. The LTTE said in a statement that their leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, had declared September 6-7 and October 11-12 to be "days of tranquillity" for the programme to be implemented.

Brita Ostberg, the UNICEF representative in Sri Lanka, said she had appealed to the LTTE and the military to stop fighting on those days.

"I asked them," Ostberg told journalists, "Sri Lanka is trying to eradicate polio. To do that, those who vaccinate need access to children and the children need access to them." □

Sathjaya Called Off

Operation Sathjaya would appear to have been called off inconclusively though no official announcement has been made to that effect. Launched with the objective of capturing the LTTE controlled town of Kilinochchi in northern Sri Lanka, the offensive was called off 9 August according to military sources who preferred to remain anonymous. However, the Defence Ministry was refusing to confirm the decision to call off the operation. One official said the troops were "consolidating their positions," an euphemism for calling off an operation or delaying further advances.

"Operation Sathjaya" was launched July 26 in the wake of Sri Lanka's worst military tragedy at the north-eastern

Mullaitivu military base, where more than 1,400 soldiers were officially declared killed or missing in action. Sri Lankan security forces also lost military hardware worth over \$25 million debacle.

Previously the military had said its troops, backed by tanks, artillery and air support, were poised on the outskirts of Kilinochchi. But the LTTE said the army's advance had been stalled by minefields and heavy mortar and rocket-propelled grenade fire from the Tigers.

Military observers saw the launch of Operation Sathjaya as a desperate gamble by the government to turn a military setback into a victory by capturing

Kilinochchi. But the 3000 troops which took part in the operation for several days managed to capture Parathan in the course of their advance, but thereafter were bogged down suffering mounting casualties in the face of fierce Tiger resistance. LTTE statements claimed that their fighters had pinned down government troops trying to advance on Kilinochchi. They said that for days the military had been making a desperate bid to break out of Parathan to occupy more territory by capturing Kilinochchi with no success.

Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe said on 8 August that three officers and 49 soldiers were killed and 67 others were wounded as troops advanced to Karadipokku, 1 kilometre north of Kilinochchi. However, high ranking military sources have been quoted as admitting to death of over 100 soldiers and more than 350 wounded. Munasinghe claimed an estimated 300 Tiger guerrillas were killed. But it is widely known that official Defence Ministry figures on guerrilla casualties are often exaggerated.

The LTTE has said more than 30 civilians were killed in the fighting. An army spokesman denied rebel claims that it targets civilians, saying civilian casualties were caused by accident. □

Plight of Refugees

The offensive resulted in many buildings in Kilinochchi had been flattened by air and artillery strikes and civilians numbering tens of thousands had fled the town and its outskirts. Western aid agency officials say about 200,000 people who fled areas of heavy fighting are running out of food and water. On 12 August, the army allowed the first food convoys into the area in three weeks, ending a blockade on food distribution to Tiger-held areas.

Some refugees were hiding in the jungle, living under trees near irrigation tanks because of drought, while others sought sanctuary with friends and relatives.

"There isn't enough water," said a retired irrigation engineer travelling to Colombo to find money to feed his family trapped in the northern mainland. "People survive on one meal a day."

He said he found shelter in a school with 30 other families after fleeing Kilinochchi and recently had a narrow escape after he went back to collect some belongings. "While I was there a plane came and bombed the house behind mine," he told journalists at Vavuniya. "I hid in a bunker in my house and narrowly survived." Asked about the government's peace plan, "People are not

ready to look at the peace plan when they are being hammered and starved," said the retired engineer.

Refugees say people are disillusioned by the apparent disregard shown to civilians by both sides and the increasingly bleak prospects of resolving the conflict. "There is no one to help us, neither the government, nor the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) nor aid agencies," said a Tamil refugee who came to Vavuniya 15 August.

"The people are angry," he said, declining to give his name for fear of reprisals. "In the name of killing the LTTE, the government is destroying the Tamils. Innocent people are dying for no fault of their own."

The plight of people who were evacuated from Jaffna to the Kilinochchi region following Operation Riviresa 2 is well illustrated by the case of the family of Mrs. B. Emmanuel (53 years) and four children who hailed from Koyathottam in Jaffna. People in their thousands have been wandering through jungles without food or shelter with aim of either returning to Jaffna or government controlled Vavuniya which is an enormously difficult task. Those who are unable to reach these two destinations, have gone to Akkarayan, Skandapuram and Mankulam and other areas in the Vanni region.

In Mrs Emmanuel's case, her husband is working abroad, and with the money he remitted, the family had a reasonably "normal life" before being evacuated from Jaffna. From her village first she with her four children found refuge at Muhanaalai in Chavakachcheri from where she came over to Kilinochchi. When Operation Sathjeya was launched on 26 July, she left Kilinochchi and moved to the Vanni region and found refuge at the Kalaimagal Maha Vidiyalayam turned into a welfare centre. Two of her children are over 16 years of age. The other two are 13 and 15. Mrs. Emanuel and her four children first went to Omanthai (under LTTE control) hoping to go to Vavuniya. Finding "obstacles" being placed in taking the two older children, Mrs. Emanuel and the two younger children found their way to Vavuniya. In spite of the enormous problems associated with entering and living in Vavuniya, she and her two children are there clueless as to their future.

As of 20 August, 3490 families totalling 14,003 persons had reached Vavuniya having been displaced from Kilinochchi most of whom are living in welfare centres with the sole aim of returning to Jaffna to their homes. As of 22 August, it was reported that 64,879 persons from 16,250 families from the Kilinochchi district have sought refuge in Mullaitivu, Mannar and Vavuniya dis-

tricts.

Some 200,000 people who fled the fighting in the Kilinochchi area are dangerously short of food, water and shelter, a relief agency said on 21 August.

Gordon Molitor, CARE's director in Sri Lanka, praised the army and the LTTE for allowing some food to be delivered to refugees in the northern war zone, but said that was not enough. "More relief is desperately needed," he said in a statement adding, "The humanitarian situation is precarious and may get even worse."

Since the lifting of the blockade, the government said 296 food trucks have been sent to the area. However a Reuters report datelined 8 September said quoting aid workers that food was not reaching some of an estimated 200,000 refugees because of problems in distribution in the Tamil rebel-held northern Wanni mainland despite the resumption of daily food convoys.

"Quite a lot of food is going across but some groups of refugees no registered with government authorities and not entitled to food rations are not getting enough food," said Frances Stevenson of Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF). "We've seen signs of under-nu-

trition, especially among children, because food distribution is patchy and some refugees not entitled to food rations go for days without proper food if they don't have money to buy it," Stevenson said malaria was on the increase because of a shortage of anti-malarial drugs in the region and the disruption of an anti-malaria campaign.

Arve Ofstad, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) representative, said there would not have been any food shortage for refugees after the army lifted a three-week blockade in mid-August, had it not been for the distribution problems. "Since the resumption of food convoys our impression is that sufficient food is going into the area," said adding, "But there may be gaps because of difficulties in distribution."

The United States announced recently that it had given \$1.1 million for refugee rehabilitation work in Sri Lanka through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Earlier the UNDP said it would provide \$267,000 to develop a programme to rehabilitate Jaffna after talks with the

people and local authorities in the devastated peninsula. □

Refugee Flow to Tamil Nadu

For the first time since 1987, Tamils from Sri Lanka mainly displaced by recent fighting in the north began to cross over to South India, initially in small numbers, and as the days passed over 1,500 are reported to have crossed in boats. The Central government in New Delhi and the Tamil Nadu state government expressed concern at this development.

By and large, the reaction to the arrival of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees into Tamil Nadu was less than welcome. It was quite clear that from the heady days of unquestioned support that the leaders and people of Tamil Nadu gave the Sri Lankan Tamils in the aftermath of the July 1983 violence and the following years, the situation has dramatically changed.

While DMK leader and Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M. Karunanidhi, expressed sympathy and support for Sri Lankan Tamils in general, and the displaced Tamils in particular, he lost no time in making it clear that it was not an open invitation to Tamil Tigers to go over to Tamil Nadu. In the Tamil daily, "Murasoli" which he edits, and the editorial of each issue of which is personally written by the Chief Minister himself in the form of an open letter to his "Blood Brothers", Karunanidhi made his

position clear in the following terms:

"Even at the risk to our lives, we take the position that all Tamils, whether they be in Tamil Nadu, Eelam or even in distant England, should be protected. Even if all Tamils from Sri Lanka came over to Tamil Nadu, we are prepared to embrace them. DMK would never support or permit our fertile land to be turned into a battleground of violence. We have never prevented or condemned the measures taken to prevent infiltration into Tamil Nadu by Tamil Tigers. It is one thing to stop the Tigers from coming. It is another thing to stop our Tamils coming in search of refuge. Let the refugees in, but stop the Tigers in their track is our policy and our clarion call."

Police began screening Tamil refugees as arrived in India from Sri Lanka in recent days to detect whether there were anyone belonging to the Tamil Tigers, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu said on 19 August. Chief Minister Muthuvel Karunanidhi told the State Assembly that coast guard and intelligence agencies had joined a search for Tamil Tiger cadres and their supporters.

Fishermen in Tamil Nadu were warned that their boats would be seized if they helped Sri Lankan Tamils to cross the Palk Straits into India, The Pioneer newspaper reported. At the same time,

the paper quoted fishermen as saying that they were threatened by armed Tamil militants, who frequently forced them to take on refugees mid-sea and deliver them to India's shores.

"The refugees appeal to our mercy and the Tiger rebels threaten us mid-sea," one fisherman was quoted as saying. "We ferry them in, and here the district administration pressures us. We seem to be trapped between the devil and the deep sea." Some refugees were quoted as saying that they were encouraged to cross over to India by the LTTE

which hoped the refugee flow would draw international attention to Sri Lanka's civil war.

As the first refugees arrived, the government ordered that their boats be seized in an effort to deter other Sri Lankans Tamils planning to flee to India, the report said. A local newspaper reporter at Rameswaram said that some 25,000 fishermen had started a five-day strike against what they called harassment by police, who accused them of ferrying refugees. □

ICRC Helps Students Sit Exams

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said on 2 September that it was helping the Sri Lankan government hold GCE Advance Level examinations in the LTTE controlled areas in the north of the island.

The government said nearly 172,000 students were sitting the examinations which started on 2 August, including students in the northern Wannai mainland, most of which is controlled by the LTTE.

"We're escorting education ministry examiners at their request," the ICRC's Gerard Peytrignet told journalists. "We have guarantees from the LTTE that everything will run smoothly and the ICRC work will be accepted."

He said the government had asked the ICRC to help conduct the national examinations for "A" level students in

the north where a big battle near the LTTE-held town of Kilinochchi displaced more than 200,000 civilians from their homes in the latter part of July.

Peytrignet also said the flow of food to the refugees displaced by the fighting was back to normal. The ICRC in early August escorted government food convoys across no-man's land into the Wannai after the army lifted a three-week blockade on transport vehicles to the LTTE-held areas of the north.

The LTTE, in a statement issued from their London office, on 2 September accused the government of blocking food supplies to the north. But the government has said it was the LTTE which deprived refugees of food by confiscating large stocks of government supplies for use by their own fighters. □

LTTE's Mullaitivu Arms Bonanza

The Tigers would appear to have amassed an unprecedented vast quantity of weapons when they overran the Mullaitivu army camp in north-eastern Sri Lanka in late July in the course of its "Operation Unceasing Waves". So much so, reports indicate that for the first time the Tigers are in possession of the quantity of weapons which are considered too many for their cadres, limited in number, to handle in their fight against government forces.

The LTTE journals also have claimed that the Tigers "destroyed" over 1200 soldiers, including senior officers, within few hours of the launch of its operation and capturing the camp, and a further 200 were killed when the military sent in reinforcements in an ill-fated attempt to dislodge the Tigers from the camp by landing troops at nearby Alampil.

The Tigers, though they admit casualties on their side, have denied the claim by the army spokesman, Brig. Sarath Munasinghe, based on an alleged con-

fession by a "Sea Tiger" reportedly now in custody that over 800 Tigers died and another 1500 of them were injured in the first two days of the Battle for Mullaitivu camp.

In their "Viduthalai Puligal" issue of 27 August, the Tigers have published an impressive list of the array of weapons they took away from the fallen camp, and this list includes:

AK type guns	1,402
RPD LMG guns	93
FNC	1
60mm mortar	30
81mm mortar	12
120mm mortar	2
W-85 Anti aircraft guns	3
T-69-1 RPG launchers	29
PKG PMG	26
T-81 A1 LMG	2
G3 A3	5
L-300	4
A5 Colt pistol	1
Browning pistol	4

TT-33 Rokkarov guns	2
CZ-75 guns	2
380 revolvers	1
HK-69 A-1 40mm grenade guns	3
40 MMRCLM 40 A1	26
106 MMRCLM 40 A1	1
120mm Horvitzer Artillery guns	2
Bullets: 5.56 x 45	12,193
7.62 x 39	1,514,596
7.62 x 51	8,483
7.62 x 54	84,452
12.7 x 98	10,243
12.7 x 108	23,377
Bullet links: 7.62 x 39	28,300
7.62 x 51	80,800
7.62 x 54	8,675
40mm grenades	42
Rifle grenades	487
40mm RPG shells	821
106mm RCL shells	59
122mm Hovitzer artillery shells	903
25 boulder shells	672
120mm mortar shells	2,297
81mm mortar shells	1,350
60mm mortar shells	1,071
82mm mortar shells	30
Hand grenades	2,846
Gas shells	138
Claymore mines	334
Hand electrical firing device	227
Jumping mines	360
Pressure mines	3,222
Controlled mines	65

The LTTE also published a list of weapons allegedly captured from reinforcement troops landed at Alambil in their 27 August issue of Eelanatham.

AK type guns	85
RPD LMG	16
Mc GPMG	02
PKG PMG	01
T69 - 1 RPG launchers	05
60 MM commando mortars	01
60 MM mortar	03
81 MM mortar	04
Maccam 40 MM MGL	02
Sniper rifle type AW	01
UZI	01
40 MM grenade	180
Bullets	
7.62 x 39	146,000
7.62 x 51	874
7.62 x 54	5,915
Bullets with link	
7.62 x 39	900
7.62 x 51	2,500
7.62 x 54	2,675

Besides the LTTE has shot down an M1-17 helicopter which was landing troops; the powerful naval mother-ship

'Ranaviru' which was providing protection for the naval boats was blown up by Black Sea Tigers; some other naval vessels including a landing craft and a Super Dvora were also damaged.

Besides the above, the Tigers also got away with various types of communication equipment, naval boats, and armoured-plated vehicles including South African built Buffel vehicles. □

Govt's Propaganda Drive

The Sri Lankan government is to carry out an image-building campaign in Europe and Asia to counter what it alleges as anti-government propaganda carried out by Tamil Tigers and the supporters abroad, Minister of Media, Tourism and Aviation Mr. Dharmasiri Senanayake announced at a weekly cabinet news briefing in Colombo on 22 August.

He said that the government had approved a \$4 million international campaign over a period of two years adding that the image-building campaign,

which will be handled by an international public relations firm, will start in the winter and will be targeting Europe and Asia, with emphasis on countries including Britain, Italy, France, Germany, Japan, USA, India, and South Korea.

The minister added that it was essential to effectively counter and demolish disinformation and "false propaganda" against Sri Lanka spread abroad by Tamil rebels, who he said were even using Internet for their "nefarious purposes." □

Arrest of "Train Bomber"

The Sri Lankan military said on 3 September that it had arrested an allegedly Tamil Tiger who it claimed planted the bomb that ripped apart a packed commuter train killing nearly 60 and injured over 500 people when two time bombs ripped apart two coaches of a commuter train at the Dehiwela station in the suburb of Colombo on 24 July this year. A third bomb was defused.

"We have arrested one of the people who placed one of the three bombs on the train," military spokesman Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe told reporters. Munasinghe declined to say how many people were involved in the bombing but presented the suspect to the reporters, allowing them to question him briefly through an interpreter.

The man identified himself as Savarimuttu Loganathan, aged 23, said to be from northern Jaffna. Answering questions from reporters, Loganathan said he boarded the train at the Kollupitiya railway station with the bomb in a bag and placed it on a luggage rack. He planted the bomb and got off at Dehiwela shortly before the bombs went off. The suspect added that he joined the LTTE in 1989 and came to Colombo in 1992 to work as a barber to stay under cover.

But the LTTE in a statement shortly after the bombing of the passenger train denied any responsibility for the attack saying that do not attack civilian targets.

According to police, they arrested two women suspects following the arrest of Loganathan when they raided their rented home in Dehiwala.

Munasinghe said Loganathan was arrested on 2 September during police

raids on what he claimed as two LTTE safe houses in Colombo and north-western Puttalam district. A stock of arms and ammunition, including two disposable US-made rocket launchers and 3.5 kg (eight lb) of explosives, automatic rifles, grenades and a cache of 119 rounds of ammunition and electronic explosives detonators were recovered, he said adding that several other LTTE suspects were also detained. □

Tigers Overrun Police Post

Tamil Tiger cadres overran an isolated police post at Kudopokuna near Welikande in Sri Lankan Northeast early on 29 August killing 24 policemen, according defence officials.

A large group of Tigers cadres stormed the Kudapokuna police post before dawn. The entire post was overrun, said a defence official. The Tigers before they left the scene raided armoury and got away with many weapons. □

Displaced Students Attend School

About 40 percent of displaced students in the war-torn northern Jaffna peninsula are now attending school, Education Ministry said on 4 September.

The Ministry has already supplied the necessary equipment for the schools in the Jaffna district following requests from the army and the Government Agent of Jaffna.

A total of 36 schools have reopened in Jaffna town alone and the attendance has been satisfactory. The Asian Development Bank and the World Bank have supplied equipment to those schools under different projects. □

More Go Abroad For Work

The number of Sri Lankans working abroad increased by 30 percent in the first six months of this year over the same period last year, according to sources of the Foreign Employment Bureau in Colombo.

The sources from the Bureau said that over 73,500 people were registered with the Bureau for Jobs Abroad and that about 70 percent of them went through licensed agents.

The major demand abroad is still for Sri Lankan housemaids and over 60 percent of those who went abroad between January and June this year were housemaids, the sources said.

The Sri Lankan government is working to improve and expand facilities for people leaving for foreign employment, which has become a major source of foreign exchange earnings and helped to reduce the domestic unemployment burden, the sources added. □

Romantic Move

Marriage offers from soldiers are apparently flying thick and fast for young Tamil girls in the war-torn Jaffna peninsula, according to statement made by the LTTE on 21 August which described the action of the soldiers as harassment.

"In a Machiavellian move to break Tamil peoples' resistance to Sri Lankan army occupation of Jaffna peninsula, soldiers stationed there are harassing Tamil girls with offers of marriage," the statement said.

The LTTE also said female soldiers in the mainly Sinhalese army were chasing Tamil boys with marriage offers. □

Shelters for Street Children

Sri Lanka authorities have commenced a project to provide street children with permanent shelters for the night, the Ministry of Social Services announced on 2 September.

The project is geared to laying a foundation for these children's well-being. Although these children are also entitled to social benefits, most of them do not get the opportunity to enjoy them for reasons such as ignorance and lack of enthusiasm, the Ministry said.

It added that the government believed that these children should also be accepted by society and given an opportunity for education and employment for them to become useful citizens of the society.

There are more than 50,000 street children in the island country, according to local press reports. □

Crack down on army deserters

Sri Lanka authorities have begun arresting army deserters who did not return to their camps despite a two-month government amnesty, army spokesman Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe said on 22 August.

Since the amnesty lapsed at the end of last month, the military has arrested 311 soldiers, including two officers, Munasinghe told a news conference.

They are among the 15,000 who deserted the army during the past five years as fighting escalated between government forces and the LTTE.

"But 4,206 deserters responded to the pardon and have returned to their duty stations," he said. The army, strapped for troops to fight the LTTE, has offered amnesties in the past, but it is the first time it has publicised arrests.

Military sources said the army's recruitment campaign gathered some momentum soon after troops captured the Tiger northern Jaffna peninsula stronghold in a series of well publicised offensives that ended last April.

But the army suffered its worst setback last month when Tigers overran a

key army camp in the island's Northeast, killing or capturing the camp's 1,400 soldiers.

Observers say a number of failed attempts by the military establishment to boost its numbers through recruitment drives may also have prompted the government to offer the general amnesty.

Defence analysts in Colombo say that because of the large number of casualties over the years, and considering the vast area of the north east that the forces

are expected to cover in their continuing battle with the Tamil Tigers, and the lack of response to recruitment efforts, the security forces severely undermanned and the thousands of desertions have made the situation worse.

In addition there's also a damaging social cost. Many deserters are unable to find legitimate employment and join criminal gangs, who offer them protection and money in exchange for their guns and professional expertise. A spate of violent crimes and bank robberies across Sri Lanka in recent months has focused attention of the issue of army desertion. □

President's Visit to Korea

Shortly after the return of President Chandrika Kumaratunga from a 3-day state visit to South Korea seeking assistance to speed up Sri Lanka's economic development, an office building housing a South Korean firm in eastern Sri Lanka was subjected to a grenade attack was made reportedly by the Tamil Tigers.

The President, the first head-of-state from Sri Lanka to visit South Korea in 12 years, hoped for more active investment by Korean companies. The Korean government asked her government to help South Korean businesses take part in the island's communications, power generation, steel and road building and other infrastructure projects.

A loan agreement providing Sri Lanka with \$50million from South Korea's Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) was signed during the visit.

Trade between the two countries has rapidly grown in recent years. Two-way trade reached \$387 million last year from \$194 million in 1990, according to Seoul government figures. South Korea now has 79 projects in Sri Lanka with investments totalling \$104.6 million, making it the third largest foreign investor after Japan and Hong Kong.

The office of a South Korean company in the eastern port-city of Trincomalee was attacked by grenades on 15 August. The blast damaged the office of Korea Telecom International, which is building a telephone exchange in the city. The authorities blamed the LTTE for the attack. It was unclear as to why the Tigers attacked the company, but some analysts attribute the attack to President Kumaratunga's highly publicised visit to Korea in the context of increased Korean investment in the island.

Seoul has reportedly asked Colombo to tighten security for its citizens in Sri Lanka after a bomb attack allegedly by Tamil Tigers upon an office of a South Korean Company located in the eastern

port city of Trincomalee on 14 August. "The South Korean Embassy in Sri Lanka has told South Koreans there to take precautions and also asked the government there to enhance security for our citizens," a Foreign Ministry statement in Seoul said on 16 August.

The South Koreans had been building telecommunication facilities at the navy base in Trincomalee. The blasts shattered windows and damaged some parts of the building. Within 48 hours, all 20 South Koreans in the Trincomalee area had been evacuated to Colombo.

The grenade attack on the Korean office was preceded by two bombs being thrown at a telecom office under construction in Trincomalee, causing no casualties but considerable damage to the building. Police said the Tigers were attempting to disrupt the development work initiated by the government for the benefit of Tamil civilians in the Trincomalee area. □

Suicide Squad Suspect Arrested

An alleged suspect head of a Tamil rebel suicide squad was reported arrested on 9 September in Anuradhapura town in North Central province by Sri Lanka's security forces, according to military sources.

The sources claimed that the man identified as Illanko had with him a pen with invisible ink which he used to write progress reports to the LTTE leadership.

Illanko who was alleged to be on a mission to bomb the sacred Sri Maha Bodhi Shrine at Anuradhapura town, had assumed the name of Ramasamy and posed as a truck cleaner. He was arrested on suspicion while travelling in the truck with three others, the sources said. The sources stated that according to military intelligence, he was one of the most wanted rebel operatives in Colombo.

Details of the planned attack had been revealed by another rebel operative who had been arrested a few days earlier. According to alleged information given by this operative, Ilango had planned to use a 10-member suicide squad to attack the Sri Maha Bodhi Shrine and ram through all security barriers on their way to the target, the sources added. □

Civilians Questioned

Security forces questioned hundreds of civilians in the Jaffna peninsula in an attempt to seek information about LTTE's presence and their presence and released all but one man, military sources said on 21 August.

Security forces which now control the peninsula launched an eight-hour search on the previous day for Tigers in the village of Kokuvil. The military said 350 men and 250 women between the ages of 15 and 35 were questioned. One of the men reportedly was being held in custody.

Troops came under fire during the operation and three civilians, one of them a 7-year-old child, were wounded in the exchange of gunfire, the military said. This exchange indicates that the army has not succeeded in eliminating the LTTE presence in the peninsula. □

"Human Rights, A Wavering Commitment"

In a 31-page report released on 14 August titled "Sri Lanka: Wavering Commitment to Human Rights", Amnesty International said that, two years since it came to power, the People's Alliance government continued to tolerate human rights violations while refusing to take the crucial steps needed to ensure that human rights protection became a reality in Sri Lanka.

Although the situation has improved dramatically since the late 1980s, the government's stance allows violations such as extrajudicial executions, "disappearances" and torture to continue, particularly in the context of its conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) armed opposition group.

"Despite its public commitment to protect human rights, the government is trying to justify human rights violations because it is fighting a war," Amnesty International said. "This is duplicitous at the very least. The deliberate targeting of innocent men, women and children for horrifying abuses such as electroshock torture and rape can never be justified."

Amnesty International is particularly concerned at the recent escalation of human rights violations, including the killing of numerous civilians in several deliberate bomb attacks in and around Colombo attributed to the LTTE, and the alleged indiscriminate killings of civilians by both sides during fighting in the north and east. At the very minimum, both the LTTE and the government should ensure that all necessary steps are taken to protect the safety of civilians, including refraining from indiscriminate attacks, the organization said.

"The government cannot just rest easy by saying that things are not as bad as they used to be," Amnesty International said. "This complacency is completely unacceptable to the families of victims such as 17-year-old Arumai-

thurai Tharmaletchumi, who was raped and then shot dead by government soldiers, and 14-year-old Anthony Joseph, who was shot between his legs when he tried to stop them."

There has been some progress with the introduction of a number of safeguards to prevent human rights violations, like the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission and the arrest of alleged perpetrators. But the government is still refusing to amend provisions in several laws which fall far short of international standards and facilitate torture, deaths in custody, "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions.

Amnesty International is also concerned about the issue of impunity for past human rights violations. Only a few court cases have been instigated against members of the security forces charged with violations, and these have been proceeding very slowly.

The organization is calling on the government to repeal or amend the widely formulated powers to arrest and detain currently given to the security forces, and to speed up investigations and judicial proceedings against those accused of human rights violations. It is also urging the LTTE leadership to make a clear statement condemning and prohibiting the deliberate and arbitrary killing of civilians.

The LTTE has argued that killings of Sinhalese civilians settled by the government in certain areas of the north and east can be justified because they consider them to be actively taking part in the armed conflict. One LTTE spokesperson tried to justify present human rights abuses by the organization in the context of general discrimination against Tamils.

An Amnesty International delegation which visited Sri Lanka earlier this year gathered evidence from victims and eye-

witnesses of human rights abuses committed by both government forces and armed opposition groups. The victims included women and children as young as 12.

Since April 1995, government security forces have arbitrarily detained thousands of Tamil people and have been responsible for torture, extrajudicial executions and more than 60 "disappearances" of Tamils. Armed Tamil groups opposed to the LTTE, including the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) and Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), have also committed human rights abuses.

The LTTE have been responsible for deliberate and arbitrary killings of Sinhalese civilians; summary executions of Tamils considered to be "traitors"; and torture and ill-treatment of prisoners and young boys and girls who were forced to join the group.

Among the personal stories highlighted in Amnesty International's report are:

* July 1995 - A 15-year-old girl who had been recruited by the LTTE at the age of 12, reported how she was tortured by navy officers after she surrendered to them in Jaffna district. She alleged that she was held naked and tortured by being hung upside down. A young woman who surrendered around the same time alleged that navy officers pulled a shopping bag full of petrol over her head.

* July 1995 - 15-year-old Dharmalingam Chandramohan was taken away by army personnel from Muttur "GPS" Camp in Trincomalee district. Relatives made enquiries at the camp but officers denied arresting him. Nothing more has been heard of his whereabouts.

* August 1995 - Lakshmi Pillai was raped at her home in Trincomalee by two army informants in front of her two sons. The motive may have been revenge as she had spoken out about being raped before at Plantain Point army camp in August 1993.

* 11 February 1996 - Soldiers killed 24 civilians, including 13 women and seven children below the age of 12, at Kumarapuram, Trincomalee district. The soldiers broke open the shutters of houses and shot at the people hiding inside. Among the victims were Arumai-thurai Tharmaletchumi and Anthony Joseph.

* 11 June 1996 - 14 Sinhalese civilians, including four children, were killed. One survivor said that about 15 LTTE members entered his house, blindfolded nine people, tied their hands behind their back, attacked them with machetes and finally shot them. Six other villagers were reportedly dragged into the jungle and hacked to death. □

Seven Policemen Arrested

Seven Sri Lankan policemen have been arrested in connection with the killing of two civilians in the North Western province on July 9 this year, police sources said on 16 August.

The arrests were made by a special team of detectives from the Criminal Investigations Department inquiring into the deaths of the two men who had been shot and their bodies burnt on tyre pyres in the small town of Giribawa.

One of the victims was a textile

dealer, who was arrested for suspected connections with a suspected Tamil rebel bomb-find in a Colombo Buddhist temple several months ago, but was released later. However, the motive behind the killing remains a mystery.

The arrested men included an officer in charge of the Coordinating Counter Subversive Unit in the northern town of Vavuniya, a sergeant, four constables and a driver. □

Five Policemen in Custody

Five police officials accused of torturing and killing suspected JVP members during its failed insurrection from 1988-1990. Investigators also have questioned two deputy police chiefs (DIGs) who are believed to have headed the torture camp at Batalanda, about 5 miles east of Colombo.

The arrests followed investigation by a Presidential Commission headed by two judges of the Supreme Court appointed last year to probe into widespread human rights abuses, including disappearances of tens of thousands of persons during the previous UNP regime.

Witnesses told the Commission which had been hearing evidence for the last several months that they had seen police torturing suspects before taking them to nearby Kelani river, where they

were either fatally shot or doused with fuel and burned to death.

The witnesses said "dozens" of people were murdered, but it was unclear exactly how many died. Eight soldiers were arrested last year in connection with the killings, and are now on trial.

Evidence from certain witnesses would appear to suggest that the former Prime Minister and present leader of the United National Party (UNP), Ranil Wickremasinghe, other leading figures in the previous regime and top government officials knew about the existence of this torture camp and the abuses that were carried out from there. Rumours that circulating that the Commission would order the taking into custody of Mr. Wickremasinghe for questioning has been strenuously denied. □

1,500 Tamil Teachers To Be Recruited

Sri Lanka's Education Ministry announced on 3 September that it would be recruiting 1,500 Tamil medium teachers to fill vacancies in Tamil schools throughout the island.

Initially 500 of them would be recruited immediately to fill the vacan-

cies in estate schools. They would be posted to schools in the Nuwara Eliya district and 12 other districts in the Southern, Central, Sabaragamuwa and Uva provinces, Ministry sources said. The balance number of teachers will be recruited by the end of this year. □

Flour and Bread Price Hike

The Sri Lankan government announced on 22 August that the price of wheat flour and bread had been increased with immediate effect.

The price of a kilogram of wheat flour was raised by three rupees to 16.50 rupees, while the price of a loaf of bread was increased by one rupee to 6.75 rupees, the Food Commissioner's Department said.

The government was spending seven billion rupees on the wheat flour subsidy, a spokesman said.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga last month said the island must prepare for a cut in state subsidies on food to fund the ongoing war between government forces and the Tamil Tigers. Her warning came after a budget overrun caused by the war. The government has said that intensified fighting had sent defence spending soaring to 48 billion rupees by August this year from the 38 billion rupees budgeted in the 1995/96 budget last November.

But the main opposition party, the United National Party has accused the President and her government of betraying the promises they made during their election campaign not to raise prices of essential food items. □

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Being a Tamil in Colombo

by Professor S. Ratnajeevan H. Hoole

It is now eight months since I moved my family back to Sri Lanka, after 20 years abroad, the last fourteen in the US where all my children had been born. Having fled Sri Lanka then, there were now clear indications of the winds of change - the people had at the last elections firmly rejected the idea of the racist state. The new government boldly proclaimed that we Tamils are very much part of this land. While the reasons for my return are complex, that we Tamils too should make a clear commitment to those Sinhalese who were taking risks on our behalf against bigots, was certainly one.

The experience of living here has been generally pleasant and highly educative for the children, except most notably in the area of the right of us Tamils to go about as freely as the Sinhalese do. I had observed the reluctance of friends to go too far away from their residence. My brother once on a visit to Colombo had been picked up and released after a few hours of enquiry. My sister and husband who had taken my children one weekend to the play area of Majestic City and my brother's children a fortnight later, were picked up by the Bambalapitiya Police when they went there a third time, supposedly because a police informant had reported them as coming there daily for a week. However, the inquiry was professional, we were promptly informed of the arrest, and they were released in eight hours after due inquiry. One put these down as necessary inconveniences in a time of war, inconveniences within the confines of the law. The only substantive complaint we had at the time was being asked to sign a statement in Sinhalese drafted by the police and unintelligible to us, which we signed anyway so as to be quickly out of the place. In another incident, a nephew of mine working in Colombo and studying at the Open University was picked up with many others in the Wellawatte area, produced before a magistrate and transferred to Kalutara where he was relieved of his money by other prisoners in the presence of the guards. His mother was told that this was the pattern when a certain traffic officer was in charge of the station and that if a certain lawyer were hired, the police would have no objection to his release on the next court date. The mother did this. The policeman was paid several thousands of rupees by the lawyer in the presence of my nephew who then got released by the magistrate,

there being no objections from the police now, naturally. The optimist in me, in the light of the other two incidents of professional handling by the police, put this down to the occasional bad apple in the police.

That this is not so and that the problem is structural was brought to me with great force recently. My sister, a Lecturer in Mathematics at Jaffna University who has been on leave doing some research at Peradeniya, and my brother-in-law who is working at Ford, Rhodes and Thornton's Kandy Office, were at the Pettah Bus Station, on their way to Kandy, on Friday, 9th August, after visiting us. A member of the public who had been staring at them for a while made a telephone call and suddenly the police turned up, got the young couple in their mid-thirties out of the queue and accused them of being LTTE agents. While being interrogated at the Police Duty Room there, an agitated crowd had gathered round. The arresting officer, a sergeant, accused my b-i-l of visiting Pettah for the second time that day, whereas the closest he had been was to his head office in the Fort in the morning. Upon noticing a mark on my sister's elbow from an old wound, he then accused her of undergoing LTTE training and, seemingly looking for more marks, roughly asked her to raise her skirt well above her knees in front of his voyeuristic men and the crowd that had gathered. He then sent them on to the Pettah Police station in a jeep ordering his men not to let them make any calls. He followed a while later with three more arrestees and began his interrogation during which he seemed highly agitated about Mullaithivu. Upon learning that my b-i-l is a Royalist resident in Colombo but working in Kandy, he flipped his top saying Tamils can live everywhere and began slapping him while all his men were threateningly close and hurling verbal abuse. Their telling him of their previous arrest in Bambalapitiya and three arrests in Kandy, and producing a note from the OIC Kandy that they had been arrested, cleared and released, were of no help.

Shortly after mid-night the senior CID officer, one Perera, interrogated them. According to him, the reason for their being picked up was my sister's hair-style which was similar to that of an LTTE girl who had been picked up on her way from Batticaloa to Colombo! When my sister begged him to inform

the family, he said that that would not be necessary as he found them not guilty of anything and that they would be released in the morning. In the morning however, they were produced before a magistrate for further detention until August 21. When my sister reminded Mr. Perera of his promise, he simply ignored her.

Welikada was a nightmare, although free of police brutality. On arrival, even before the escorting men had left, my sister was stripped by the female wardens. There were sudden unannounced roll-calls in the men's section and those asleep were kicked and stepped upon for not rising up. Drug transactions were visibly taking place. Women were seen snorting stuff. When a prisoner my sister had befriended asked my sister to get her breakfast because she felt sick and my sister communicated this to the woman guard, the reply was a blow with her stick!

Even the Christian pastor who took the service on Sunday in prison was no less callous. His sermon had been on how he needed money to clear a computer through customs, for which he had prayed and God had answered with a US \$ 200 cheque in the mail for the prison ministry. My sister approached him and asked him to inform our parish priest, the Rev. Canon Sam Horshington whom he knew, that she was in jail. He was apparently too engrossed about his new computer to think of how he could help others. Finally it was on Monday that a civilian worker who shall remain unnamed, defied his/her bosses to give us a garbled message that my sister was at Welikade.

Once we knew, things began to move thanks to many friends and well-wishers doing God's work, unlike the pastor - our indefatigable Attorney Ramani Muttetuwegama who appeared for us "pro bono publico", C. T. Janz of the Human Rights Task Force, and Wimal Fernando and Sivagurunathan of the Movement for Development and Democratic Rights, to name a just a few. By noon we had established that my b-i-l was also being held and were able to visit them to let them know that someone was thinking of them. Ms. Muttetuwegama persuaded the OIC through police very-high-ups that no objections should be raised for their release and the next day, Tuesday, we filed a motion for their release at Hulftsdorf and waited out the morning for the case to be called. Finally the judge ordered the release of all five, there having been no objections from the police even to the release of the other three. We rushed the order to Welikade asking the jailers to produce the prisoners in court and returned to

(Continued on next page)

STATEMANSHIP, DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL MORALITY

by Dr.S.Narapalasingam*

The political correspondent of the Sunday Times (Sri Lanka), in his article titled "UNP Means Business" published on July 21, 1996, reported that Mr.Ranil Wickremasinghe, the Leader of the Opposition in the Sri Lankan Parliament who is also the leader of the United National Party(UNP), responding to the call to act in a spirit of statesmanship and co-operate with the Government in solving national crises had stated:- "statesmen were retired politicians and that he had no intention of becoming one." The call was made at a seminar organized by the UNP specially for business leaders in Sri Lanka from July 15-17. They are expected to act responsibly in their businesses!

Mr. Wickremasinghe's response

(contd. from page 11)

Hulftsdorf to await their arrival.

In a final insult, the guard at Welikade told my b-i-l that he had to pay money or he would be taken in handcuffs in public. After some haggling, the sum of Rs. 50 a person was arrived at. My b-i-l and sister arrived at Welikade without handcuffs and were released by the magistrate. One there to receive one of the other 3 prisoners told me that they had paid money to the police through their lawyer to secure the release. As a last detail, my b-i-l's identity card had to be picked up from the Pettah Police. As we arrived the men on duty laughed at us saying that the non-Sinhalese speaking party had arrived, even though both my wife and b-i-l spoke excellent Sinhalese. When we tried to explain what we were there for, we were asked if it is "a Tamil suspicion case"! I complained to the OIC about the lost ID card, my sister's skirt being raised in public and the assaulting of my b-i-l. He was apologetic but did not record my complaint. Nor did I press the matter since I would have been asked to sign a statement I could not read. The "lost" ID card was "found" only the next day after Ms. Muttetuwegama had spoken to the OIC again.

The court proceedings we watched at Hulftsdorf as we waited summed up for me what is happening in the country. A senior police officer appeared accused of disappearances. That he was accused at all is redeeming. That he was not asked by the bailiff to stand in the dock

prompts firstly a question whether he is a fit person to be the President-in-Waiting to lead the State of Sri Lanka when he so openly confesses that he is not going to behave like a "statesman" until he retires from politics. Secondly and more fundamentally, it raises the question : when is a leader a statesman?

His assertion has also prompted one to examine the working of democracy and multi-party system in multi-ethnic Sri Lanka and the reasons that have led to the destruction of the very foundations on which the nation and the society as a whole has progressed since independence, culminating in the demand by the minority Tamils for autonomy.

The widely accepted definition of a "statesman" is one who exercises politi-

like the other accused and stood there in a suit with a smug smile was frightening. In examination by the prosecutor in another abduction case that day involving a UNP MP, it was brought out that a senior CID officer had informed the MP's father, the MP at the time, that the son was wanted for abduction. That such men are still in the services explains how the president's strict orders to inform families immediately upon arrest, are flouted and with impunity. An old Hindu friend in court that day to give evidence on his stolen gold chain, was clueless as to what was going on because the proceedings were in Sinhalese, and it was a good few minutes after his case was called and postponed that he knew that his presence was no longer necessary. It shows that the state, despite stated intentions, continues to treat Tamils as non-persons.

The sum of my experience is that, while there are good policemen like the OIC at Bambalapitiya who do their duty conscientiously with the least inconvenience to suspects, there are too many men in the forces today who find this government's quest for justice a threat - be it the threat of prosecution for past misdeeds or the threat to their livelihood - and would therefore do anything to undermine the president. As a result Tamils, to be safe from police harassment, need good social or political connections or money to pay. Otherwise, woe betide them. As for us, we go out much less now, and my sister has a new hairdo on the advice of the senior CID Officer at Pettah. ●

cal leadership wisely and without narrow partisanship. But in Sri Lanka, it appears to have a different connotation. To the credit of the present Leader of the Opposition, he has been at least forthright in conveying openly his self-denial as a statesman, while other leaders have acted deceptively contrary to the accepted definition.

Democracy

The true meaning of democracy that many of us learned in school (S.F. de Silva's book on Civics used to be the standard text book used then), and which has embedded in our minds to this day is that it is a political system based on it being "government of the people, by the people, for the people", a concept formulated by the founding fathers of the Constitution of the United States of America.

Democracy in Sri Lanka is not understood in the same way Abraham Lincoln extolled it. When he referred to "people", he meant all the people, not just those of one ethnic group or the other.

How best democracy works in a country is not judged by the rhetoric of the leaders, glorifying it as a "five-star" democracy but essentially by the way the legislative, judicial and executive organs function and democratic and related principles are observed by those holding public offices in the various establishments in the executive (including particularly law enforcement) arm of the government.

A multi-ethnic society in which human rights are violated, the concerns of the minorities are ignored, arguments and demands of different groups are suppressed through acts of terror and intimidation, all members are not treated as equals and equal opportunities for its members individually or collectively as a group to improve their well-being do not exist cannot claim to be democratic. Sri Lanka has been under Emergency Rule for a considerable time and this provided excuses for the curtailment of democratic freedoms by various governments.

Political interference in the administration of the police, security forces and justice has been common even during normal times. Governments have neither accepted responsibility for many reported incidents of misuse of powers and unauthorised criminal activities of some within their own establishments nor brought the perpetrators to justice. Extra-judicial punishments including disappearances of "suspects" while in custody have been overlooked. On occasions, the leaders themselves have instigated violence against a section of the citizens. In particular, the situation that

prevailed under various Emergency regimes almost bordered on anarchy. Consequently, people may be confused between what is normally understood to be democratic and authoritarian rule, carried on in the name of "democracy".

The above observation reflects the shortsighted approach of achieving certain goals regardless of the consequences of the means used, turning a blind eye to ethics and the long-term implications to the unity of the multi-ethnic society and the integrity of the country. In this the misinterpretation of democracy as the "rule of the majority" appears to have prevailed. Political leaders' own preferences for ducking difficult issues rather than confronting them, had paid political dividends in the short term at the cost of long-term "national benefits". The term "national" is used here in the broadest sense, as understood by rational persons. In Sri Lanka, the leaders went further to perpetuate and use the ethnic issues for political gains. We are now witnessing the consequences of their irresponsible actions. Even after four decades of muddling through major issues, some leaders have not learned any lesson.

One cannot fail to notice the concealed meanings attributed to concepts as "nation", "people", "democracy" and "the rule of the majority" used in numerous debates on the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. All have one common rigid characteristic in that to many Sinhalese politicians they imply Sinhalese nation and Sinhalese people and both democracy and the rule of the majority have been interpreted in this background. Even the concept of a multi-ethnic society is accepted by some with the limitation that the minorities should be subservient to the numerical majority.

The civil wars that erupted in Russia and in Bosnia after the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia discarded totalitarianism in favour of "democracy", illustrate the problems that arise when majority rule is imposed on minority groups in multi-ethnic societies against their wishes. Some of the former communist states in Eastern Europe populated by different ethnic groups, which were held together by highly authoritarian rule, had been able to secede peacefully after embracing democratic rule. This mutually agreed method of separation of states has not been possible in other cases for various reasons. In most cases, the demand for autonomy by minority groups residing predominantly in separate regions of the country stems from their perceived dangers concerning their safety, loss of their collective and individual freedom and distinct identity, possible inhibitions to their social and economic progress and domination by

the majority group in all matters affecting their daily lives. In the final analysis, all these fears can be attributed to one composite factor, namely, the lack of trust. In the case of Sri Lanka, the threat to the unity of the people and the country originated in a more straightforward way through the destruction of the trust by political leaders not aspiring to be statesmen, but political careerists greedy for power and position.

Once the damage has been done, if the major ethnic group still wants to keep the multi-ethnic country united, then the democratic and widely accepted way that would also put an end to protracted hostilities is for the majority group to grant a mutually agreed form of self-government to the relevant regions inhabited by distinct minority groups. The agreement reached recently by President Fidel Ramos and the chairman of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), Nur Misuari to end the 24 years old civil war in Mindanao, a predominantly Muslim region in the Philippines (a mainly catholic country) is consistent with this approach. In those cases where the geographical distribution of the diverse ethnic groups is such, regional governments are infeasible then suitable power-sharing arrangements have been widely recommended to end civil wars in multi-ethnic countries.

Multi-party System

A multi-party system may not necessarily represent democracy in its purest form, especially when the political parties are formed largely along ethnic and regional lines, regardless of their commitment to democracy. Those who are not familiar with the social constitution of mixed ethnic or tribal societies in the less developed countries fail to recognize the difference between the Western-style democracy and the multi-party system in divided (not just politically) societies. In fact, the propensity for the political parties dominated by a majority ethnic group to use the lopsided power to rule to their electoral advantage is great, which only aggravates the conflict between the majority and the minority groups.

It is relevant to note the reasons that contributed so far to the preservation of the territorial integrity of India with so many diverse ethnic groups and a tradition of regionalism. First, the political system there is not a fully centralised system as in multi-party "democratic" Sri Lanka or in the former single-party authoritarian communist states. The Indian constitution is quasi-federal. Second, India fought for independence under national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawarhalal Nehru, who continued even after independence to serve all

the people as members of one large Indian Nation and work for the unity of different ethnic, religious and regional groups, in brief as statesmen unlike the self-proclaimed non-statesman in personality of the current UNP leader. Third, after independence India has been embroiled in wars with her neighbours China and Pakistan. Thus, formidable common adversaries of almost all the Indians emerged, energizing the feelings of national unity.

Responsible Leadership

At a recent seminar organised by the International Centre for Ethnic Affairs, Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Prof. G.L. Peiris, stated that empowerment, participation, stability, rationality and compassion are the five irreducible minimum elements for the establishment of civil society in Sri Lanka. In the present discussion, the last two elements, namely, rationality and compassion are relevant.

He is bewildered that a country with an intelligent, a lively population, very interested in political issues, accustomed to discussing political issues in buses, trains, boutiques all over the country, enjoying universal adult suffrage since 1931 for 65 years, practising democracy and the multi-party system which is an ingrained part of the nation's political culture, could not find a solution to the ethnic problem for so long! His explanation for this paradox is that "we have never reflected on this cancer, eating deeper and deeper in our body politic in a rational, sensible way. All discussion of this subject has been pervaded by a high degree of emotion. Very few people are able to analyse these issues in a dispassionate and objective manner. There is a rapid disappearance of the middle ground, a dramatic sense of polarisation and confrontation. Whoever is moderate is denounced as a traitor by both sides, the extremities of the political spectrum. Now this is the kind of situation that has militated against and so powerfully inhibited, the emergence of a rational solution."

While it is true that the emergence of the situation described by the Minister, has prevented a solution to the ethnic problem based on logic and reason, it is important to examine how such a situation emerged in the first place. The ordinary people are not to be blamed for creating this most intractable intolerant situation. Sri Lanka had many experienced and educated political leaders but not that many responsible statesmanlike leaders. Leaders expect others to be responsible, compassionate, tolerant, decent, law abiding and honest, which they themselves would not hesitate to breach at the very first opportunity in order to

obtain some personal or parochial benefits.

When the leaders have, for selfish and unstatesmanlike reasons, advocated mistrust, division, enmity and parochialism continuously, one should not be surprised that emotion and prejudice have displaced rational thinking among their followers in particular and the people in general. The leaders were not uneducated persons having only the gift of gab. Unless the political leaders set the example by their exemplary conduct in politics, it is foolhardy to expect their supporters among the citizenry to recognize the importance of being responsible in the interest of the entire nation. The fact that Sri Lanka has a literacy rate of 96% compared with around 37% in some Asian countries has proved to be of little relevance to the minimum qualities required for the establishment of a civil society in the country. A vicious cancer of mediocre, dishonest and opportunist gurus producing tame followers, has evolved in the political arena. One is not arguing this malign phenomenon is absent on the Tamil side. When meritocracy gave way to mediocrity and "opportunistic loyalty" (the so-called "yes-men") in decision making at the national level, rationality was compromised.

It is the failure of the political leadership in Sri Lanka that has driven the country and the people into the present predicament. As required of responsible statesmanlike leaders, they did not provide the guidance to the people but simply "sailed" with the winds of political fortune. In this process, they knowingly or unknowingly(?) misled the people. It is the people who are now made to pay directly and indirectly (unachieved living standards that have been within reach) for the sheer criminal folly of an irresponsible leadership since independence. Fear, insecurity, misery and uncertainty are the endowments of the legacy bestowed to the people by these so-called leaders after practising democracy and the multi-party system over nearly half a century.

Honest Leadership

The Justice Minister in his illuminating address is reported to have said: "Some people say that if you devolve power, do so carefully. Always protect your interests, use all kinds of stratagems, constitutional ingenuities, whatever, to make certain that when you want to interfere you have the levers at your disposal that would enable you to do so with facility and impunity." The Minister, very appropriately and effectively, responded to this type of maladroit arguments when he said: "If this is your approach, you may not as well do it at

all." What the Minister has highlighted here has a direct bearing on the most acute national problem that has brought nothing but tragedy to the country and the people. It is the attempt by some political and other leaders (religious included) not being prepared to directly confront the problem as it has evolved and exists today and not being ready to accept solutions that are commensurate with solving the problem hopefully once and for all.

Having allowed mistrust and bitterness to grow exponentially in the minds of the Sinhalese and Tamil people and which finally resulted in the most brutal civil war known in the modern history of Sri Lanka, a lasting solution to the conflict, short of separation, requires much more than a constitutional reform. Tamils from their past experience in the implementation of various provisions relating to minority rights enshrined in the various constitutions adopted since 1948 (section 29 of the 1948 constitution), District Development Councils of the early 1980s, and devolution proposals under the 13th amendment to the 1978 constitution will be wary of any new provisions which on paper claim to meet their aspirations and expel their fears. This deceptive way of having control over the minorities, which the latter have considered as an infringement of their democratic rights is still haunting the Tamil leadership. An example of this is, whether justifiable or not, the charge made by the LTTE against the present PA Government, when the LTTE withdrew from the peace talks in April 1995, was that the Government had a hidden agenda. Even before the LTTE leadership had seen the devolution package, it seemed to have concluded that the Government was not sincere in solving the Tamil problem. By no means the task of winning the confidence of the Tamil people has been made easier by the military actions of both warring sides, since the resumption of hostilities in April 1995.

The satisfactory working of any constitution, however well formulated, depends in the end on the intentions of the political leaders, who hold the power to rule. Not long ago, the former President under whose leadership the present (1978) constitution was drafted and adopted, secured the loyalty of his party members elected to Parliament by obtaining from them undated but signed letters of resignation! He also boasted that under the constitution, he had the powers to do anything except changing the gender of a Sri Lankan! At the same time, he pronounced that the political system he introduced in 1978 was a "five star" democracy! In 1977, the UNP was elected to rule with four-fifth majority. Although its leader acknowledged pub-

licly prior to the general elections that the Tamils had genuine grievances, he and his party did not make a genuine effort (not to be confused with the ineffective steps taken ten years later in 1987) to address the root causes that led to the grievances.

Without stopping the bloodshed, providing relief to all the people - Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims, taking effective measures to rebuild trust and explaining openly how the fears of the Sinhalese and Tamils would be overcome, any attempt to find a lasting solution to the ethnic conflict, within a united Sri Lanka, would amount to an exercise in futility.

Statesmanship

In multi-ethnic countries what is more important is the quality of national leadership, one may call it statesmanship, for the progress and contentment of all the communities, communal harmony, political stability and the development of the national economy. The rule under Lee Kuan Yew was not fully democratic in the sense of traditional Western values of freedom that accompany it. But no community felt that they were marginalised because of their ethnic or religious affiliations. The approach taken by the Singapore government to preserve the cohesiveness of the mixed society is to be emulated by all governments presiding over multi-ethnic societies. The difference between the power exercised by the Singaporean and Sri Lankan rulers is that the former used it for the social and economic advancement of all citizens, regardless of their race or religion, while the latter used it to destroy national unity and marginalise the minority Tamils, politically and economically.

The remarkable success of Singapore in economic growth and development and the attendant high living standards of Singaporeans could not have been possible, if not for the determined efforts of the political leadership in maintaining discipline in all activities; in ensuring that all obey the law; in providing equal opportunities for all citizens to contribute to and benefit from national security and development; and in promoting racial and religious tolerance and harmony, and political stability. This correlation is not a postulate but a maxim, which seems to be readily understood only by few in Sri Lanka.

Indian leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pundit Nehru (in contrast an atheist) and C. Rajagopalachari were in a position to have led very luxurious lives had they wished. They instead opted to serve all the people of all races and all faiths by sacrificing the comforts and in the case of Gandhi he chose to live

poorly, identifying himself as one among the millions of the poor peasants of India and the so-called untouchables describing them as the "children of God". Their integrity and motives were hardly doubted by most Indians or for that matter by foreigners including the British rulers against whom they were involved in a struggle for independence. Gandhi often proclaimed that he was a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian, a Buddhist and a Jew. He fasted and prayed to stop the Hindu-Muslim riots and was prepared to sacrifice his life in his efforts to stop the killings. He never identified himself as a Gujarati although he was one by birth; he believed and acted as an Indian to the core.

When all persuasions failed to convince the founder of Pakistan, Mohamed Ali Jinnah not to secede from India, Gandhi did not want the other Indian leaders to stand in his way. Gandhi was the very personification of the unity of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-cultural society. Other Indian leaders of the time never exploited the differences in the Indian society for momentary political gains. They were persons who led all the people according to what they considered ethically right and did not follow the crowd just to win popular support. Nor were they morally weak to discard their principles in order to oblige the dictates of powerful religious dignitaries for fear of losing popularity among the faithful. The difference between the then leaders in India and Sri Lanka should be obvious and needs no further elaboration.

The editorial in *The Island* (SL) of July 14, 1996 highlighted this weakness in Sri Lankan leadership most emphatically. To quote:- "What is clearly lacking today, and it has been so for the past 40 years, is a leadership with the attributes of Mandela that can transcend petty political rivalries, desist from harking back to the past and looking to the future of the country..... If we had leaders with only a fraction of the attributes of Mandela our woes would end soon." If only the Editor of *The Island*, and for that matter all other Editors of the mainstream print media, provide space in the columns of their newspapers for the expression of similar sentiments and views rather than those that reflect and promote extremism, divisiveness, prejudice and partiality as they normally do, it will go long way to the ending of all our woes.

In the case of Sri Lanka, if the opinion expressed by the Leader of the Opposition prevails broadly or is typical of those aspiring to become leaders, then one may wonder whether the country will ever have any statesman even after the politicians have retired! Even by chance

"statesmen" surface in the future when they are no longer in active politics (after retirement), of what use they will be in providing the moral guidance and influencing politics is another matter. The moral decay in the Sri Lankan society as a whole is quite evident. The struggle for power, regardless of the means used and the costs to the ordinary people, caught in the trap of unending violence and spiralling poverty, has turned the clock back by several years in so far as achieving the economic and social goals already achieved by some Asian countries. These countries were at about the

same level of development (measured narrowly in terms of literacy, life expectancy, infant mortality, nutrition and income) or even below that of Sri Lanka in 1948. Given this alarming slide backwards, the prospects for the vast majority of Sri Lankans to escape from their present predicament, as the country enters the next millennium, seem bleak unless some dramatic changes take place now in the attitude of the country's leaders and their time and efforts are diverted to social and economic development that benefits all the people. ●

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TERRITORIAL UNIT AND FAMILY UNIT

By Mervyn de Silva

The major political parties in Sri Lanka are publicly committed to devolution accepting the idea as the most likely "solution" to the thirteen year Sinhalese Tamil ethnic conflict which has threatened to tear their "paradise island" apart. But the current debate, increasingly acrimonious, is about the "unit" of devolution. And this debate has opened the door to a third party, the Muslim community, about six-to-seven percent of the island's population, concentrated mostly in the eastern province. The Muslims, a third of the population hold the balance between the Tamils (42%) and the Sinhalese. Since the Muslims speak Tamil rather than Sinhala, the Tamil parties and ideologues, expected the Muslims to join them rather than the Sinhalese. In fact, the Muslims have asserted their own separate or distinctive identity in a compact little island threatened by divisive ethnic or identity conflicts.

In the present context of a regional (and global) Islamic revivalism, the Muslims have asserted themselves by launching their own political party. The founder and President of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) Mr M H M Ashraff, is the Minister of Shipping and Ports in President Chandrika Kumaratunga's "People's Alliance" (PA) Government. Mr Ashraff can command six votes in a two hundred and twenty-five (225) seat parliament where the ruling party has such a slender majority that it is vulnerable to pressure from the smaller parties.

Since the debate now focuses public attention on the "unit" (that is, territory) as persistently as it did on "collective

identity", the SLMC's demand for a separate Muslim Unit dominates the current debate, besides, by coincidence or not, the secessionist Liberation Tamil Tigers (LTTE) have made the ethnically mixed east their main theatre of armed confrontation with the (Sinhalese) State. The Tamil heartland in the north, has been taken by the Sri Lankan army. The "Lion" flag flies over the tallest building in Jaffna, the "Eelam" heartland. (The Sinhala word for "lion" by the way, is "Sinha". This makes the ongoing war a clash between "the lion race" (Sinhala) and "Tigers" (representing the Tamils).

While Minister Ashraff, wearing his Sri Lanka Muslim Congress fez cap, insists on a separate "Muslim Unit". Colombo's political sociologists remind us that the "family" is the basic unit of community and society. If this is particularly relevant to the Sri Lankan crisis, the reason is spread out for days in the week, and especially on Sunday, on the front pages of the national newspapers. It concerns the ruling (a visitor may be tempted to say "royal") family, the Bandaranaiques.

When Solomon West Ridgeway Bandaranaike, son of Sir Solomon Bandaranaike, the Maha Kudliyar or chief adviser to British governors, realised that Prime Minister D S Senanayake, "the Father of the Nation" was grooming his son, Dudley Senanayake (St Thomas College Colombo and Cambridge) for party leadership, Bandaranaike quit the United National Party (UNP) and launched the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). Bandaranaike had an

(Continued on next page 27)

The Political wing of the Liberation Tigers in the Batticaloa and Ampara districts recently issued a pamphlet (see box) addressed to the Muslims. It was distributed a few days before the annual conference of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress. It is considered in the east as an important political statement by the Liberation Tigers.

Thurai the LTTE's political wing leader for the Batticaloa and Ampara districts gave me the pamphlet to make his point that the LTTE's relationship with the Muslim community in the east has improved dramatically in recent time.

LTTE'S MESSAGE TO MUSLIMS

"To our always beloved Muslim brothers!

In the path of our struggle which transcends ethnic and religious divisions, the contributions you have made and are making cannot be forgotten and have to be respected. The sorrowful days during which you helped the Tamils bear the miseries which they had to face as a minority stood like trees which lean to provide shadow on the path of liberation. Your words of consolation flowed like cool streams in our hearts when we had to cross rivers of fire. But communal poison is being sown amongst us today to make the very hands of friendship which provided us succour into thorns.

Today chauvinism and its lackeys and some selfish leaders are making efforts to drive a wedge between us who speak the same language, who share the same livelihood resources and who have lived together like Pittu and the (scraped) coconut in it. They are more desirous of promoting their interests than look after our welfare. You have to identify them.

In the mid-1980's the Sri Lankan government sought advice from Israel's Mossad to crush the desire for liberation among the minorities. No-one but innocent Tamil and Muslim people were the victims of (the consequences of) Mossad's advice. The Mossad's aim was to use the Muslims as pawns to divide the minorities and to create animosity towards them (the Muslims) permanently. Riots broke out. A considerable number of minority people were killed. Many became refugees. That the Sri Lankan government is ruining our lives by using the same tick again and again and that the consequences of this are affecting the minorities everywhere in the country today are truths we all know.

The Muslims are a distinct community. It necessarily needs a leadership which can safeguard and nurture its religious, cultural and social values. But it is our wish that its leaders should not be communalists who have only chauvinism as their basis like the Sinhala governments which have, one after the other, come to power. Today anyone can raise the chauvinist cry. By distorting incidents which took place here and there making young blood boil and by nurturing hatred (one) can even go to Parliament.

But what we need is a leadership which can realistically and with vision judge the future of our people who have lived inseparably together as one by virtue of language and region."

"We have a very friendly and cordial relationship with the Muslim people. For example you can see that they come and go freely into areas under our control to engage in trade and to work," he said. He denied the massacres but said that some unfortunate events took

place" and that everything possible would be done to strongly cement Muslim-Tamil relationship and rectify all that". He points out some businesses owned by Muslims in the Paduvankarai region which the LTTE now dominates to make his point. He also gives me two pamphlets by the political section of the Batticaloa-Ampara division of the LTTE addressed to the Muslims. Suspicions, however, linger.

On my way back I met some Tamil agricultural labourers from Batticaloa who had been working in the paddy fields of Sammanthurai going home. They had been asked to return to their villages in view of the SLMC's annual conference.

The concern apparently was with the security of the VIPs who were scheduled to attend the conference although officially no-one was prepared to even acknowledge the Tamil labourers from Batticaloa. This annoyed Muslim landowners who were anxious about gathering the harvest before the unseasonal rains which have hit the east in recent times.

It was feared that the LTTE, despite its statements, might infiltrate Sammanthurai to stage an attack or attempt an assassination during the conference. This is connected to the killing of two Tamil youths whom the Police alleged were Black Tigers sent to blow up Fowzie and Ashraff in Kalmunai recently. However, some Muslims and some ex-Tamil militants helping the army say that these were not Tigers but innocent school boys. The SLMC seems to have decided not to acmy head to the sacrifice of the suicide fighters."

The LTTE is yet to reciprocate the hand of friendship extended by Mr Hisbullah. Although it now clearly refrains from attacking the SLMC directly, the LTTE keeps sermonising to the Muslims about Advisive communal politics practised by some Muslim leaders." The pamphlet issued recently by the Tigers in Batticaloa and Ampara basically takes on the SLMC without referring to that party or its leadership by name. But some informed sources in Batticaloa seem to think that Mr Hisbullah's line might eventually bring about at least some manner of tacit rapprochement between the Tigers and the SLMC if the security situation does not improve in the government's favour.

The Tigers, they point out, have for
(Continued on page 29)

Controversy clamps down the proposals on devolution and there is a growing fear the arrangements to devolve power and responsibility to regions will collapse in the same way as the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact and the Dudley Senanayake-Chelvanayagam agreements.

If there is any likely majoritarian consensus, it may mean really to carry on with these arrangements despite all its deficiencies and defects, the arrangements that followed the 13th amendment to the constitution of 1978 and the Provincial Councils Act of 1987.

But it will lead to no peace at all. This diluted devolutionary exercise that was devised however, is something that former President J R Jayewardene had to accept because of a superior power's insistence. It clearly demonstrated that force majeure alone matters in politics or international relations.

The present antagonism to devolution articulated by extreme elements which conclude that military suppression is the only answer to a political problem is thoroughly short-sighted. Such an idea of force alone as a solution to contentious issues is bound to fail. As the tragic recrudescence of militancy indicates in Ireland or elsewhere, militant rebellion against majoritarian insensitivity cannot be militarily subdued.

Such insurrectionist violent uprisings need political answers. Even though questions as to the grievances of dissidents, the grievance felt or even perceived is that a numerically lesser ethnic group is not sharing power and its demonstration of discontent cannot be put down by force alone.

Both the advocates of military repression and the militants have to acknowledge that solutions to grievances arising from political deprivation or disadvantage can be furnished only through redress of grievances by political means and the supply of answers to deficiencies by political accommodation and inclusion.

It is simply wrong to justify centralised rule in Sri Lanka on the basis that it has been the usual form of Government from the past.

Actually centralised rule was an exception and never the feature in the past. Indeed the notable figures such as Dutha Gamini, Vijayabahu I, Parakramabahu I, or Parakramabahu VI are exceptional figures because they united the country which was otherwise fragmented into autonomous regions.

The truth that autonomy was general in the Governments in early Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and that there were princi-

DEVOLUTION, A POLITICAL ANSWER TO AVOID FURTHER MILITARISATION

By Professor Bertram Bastiampillai

palities under chiefs and princes, more or less independent, approximate more to the historical truth than that Sri Lanka was a unitary country.

The present day concept of unitary government has been bequeathed to the island by the British with their system of roads to link together areas proconsuls in the capital and in provinces regents to execute centrally issued fiats, and their representatives in districts using the mode of indirect rule through the indigenous hierarchy of headman to assert the central governor's authority were all honed to provide unitary management.

The billeting of military garrisons at diverse places in India or Sri Lanka was used by the British to facilitate the management of unitary government. This form of centralised unitary administration was in order to impose alien power in the interests of imperialism, be it political, economic or cultural.

Today we have to reckon with the reality that Sri Lanka is a multi-communal land composed of a varied ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual plural population. The form of government hence should suit this actual condition, and majoritarianism is certainly not the way of managing affairs either peacefully or smoothly in an environment characterised by diversity.

It will drive those that are not of the majority community to be alienated and discontented. They will not voluntarily grant their consent to be governed as subordinates of the majority.

There is a haunting baseless fear among a few from the majority that devolution will cause separation with the North-East joining Tamil Nadu. This is wrong. India is the surest and strongest guarantor of Sri Lankan integrity. India does not tolerate separatism. Moreover when autonomy was given to linguistic regions in India the clamour for separatism in the South subsided.

Only a few aberrant and insignificant elements still talk of separatism as much as a few in Sri Lanka keep shouting vainly of resurrecting a mythical past. Therefore India had made clear that grant of autonomy to the Sri Lankan minority Tamil community would help to end militancy and discontent among them.

The cry for separatism by some in Quebec in Canada stems from a refusal to give it generous devolution with a distinct status. However on two occasions the people of Quebec voted against sepa-

ratism. Therefore to talk of devolution encouraging separatism is wrong. Separatism can be fought for because of other provocations with or without any devolution being allowed to a region or people.

Devolution deters on the other hand a possible abuse of power by an over mighty centralised authority. A counter to an authoritative centralised government is created by devolution which permits assigning to peripheral area bodies, a reasonable quantum of legislative and executive powers. Similarly to the regional power also could be devolved some judicial power by creating less expensive and more easily accessible judicial institutions in the regions.

Superior judicial power alone need to be retained at the centre.

Federal systems in the US, Switzerland, Germany, India and Australia afford examples of a positive experience of the devolution of power.

All these countries have in regions within them their own body politic endowed with their own governmental powers. They do not comprise merely provinces or administrative sub-divisions of a central authority. Each of these regional units have their own democratically elected legislature, administrative structures and regional judiciaries with defined powers.

Generally the central authority, in such states where devolution has been introduced, manages and conducts foreign affairs, issues of citizenship, immigration and emigration, currency and money, customs and industrial property rights, copyrights, patents and other such common matters which impinge indiscriminately on all people across the board.

In reality there is a tendency in the national or central level for managers to extend their own powers. To combat this and curb the proclivity, regions have been vested with legislative power in the field of culture, to an extent in education, and over questions of police and internal security. The regional authorities are allowed general administrative competence or jurisdiction.

What is of interest to the regional population is agreeing to be administered by elected regional bodies who are accountable to the voters in the region. This arrangement also facilitates development which could meet the aspirations of those within the region, and administration is left in the hands of those with an interest in the region itself.

An imperative requirement within a devolved set-up is the division of tax revenues equitably between the central structure and the regions. Devising a fair

system of equalising revenues and funds, and sharing them becomes a perennial problem to the National Government or the Central Authority and the regional administration or the peripheral authorities.

Furthermore, equality in the collection of revenues too becomes a problem among regional administrations themselves. Hence with a devolved set-up the people's representatives, both at the Centre and the region, would have to work diligently and co-operatively in trying to solve this vexatious problem.

Critical financial reforms have to be undertaken so as to get fairer results out of a devolutionary arrangement, in respect of all round progress and development, in the central and regional spheres.

This is nevertheless not an insuperable obstacle to devolution because in many countries they have worked out such satisfactory arrangements regarding the sharing of revenue as well as in regard to the sharing of power and responsibility for the running of the regions and the country. It will also be politic and prudent to review revenue sharing exercises from time to time so as to maintain equitable arrangements in spite of a changing economy.

It is salutary to note that in a country like Germany or the US, devolution helps to prevent authoritarianism being practised by providing checks and balances in a system where there is almost an inevitability of the separation of powers.

Where there devolution, an independent judiciary which has to adjudicate impartially on issues on conflict or competing interests is absolutely indispensable. Such a judiciary prevents the usurpation of powers, be it by the centre or the region.

Moreover devolution provides an opportunity for citizens to get closer to political decision-making and implementation. This certainly is a measure that makes it easier to cater better to regional interests. Regional administrations have a direct and intimate knowledge of problems faced by citizens within a region, and any practical decision could be made taking immediate concerns into better account.

Furthermore, regional and local problems can be handled in a way so as to provide to individual cases a fairer evaluation of their merits and defects.

In Sri Lanka it is through regional administration that the specific concerns of the minorities could be respected better and attended to. Also, by having regional administrations participating in the governance of the country the procedure of taking political decisions is rendered more transparent. Closer and firmer ties are developed between the people and their administration and the

government because devolution allows for an easier identification of the citizens with their political order.

It has been argued in Sri Lanka that devolution provides for new institutions with all their appurtenances to spring up and consequently the administration of a country becomes more expensive. Such costs however could be reduced in spite of devolution since much of the amount of what is administered from the centre will have to get administered at regional levels.

Then the staffing and other infrastructure at the central level will be reduced and ought to be transferred to regions. Even the Central legislature as well as the executive could be substantially reduced while regional institutions, on the other hand, need to be strengthened. So the Centre should be thin" and the regions thicker."

The number of representatives will be naturally lesser at the central or national level and their concerns and interests of an island-wide nature and not parochial. You should not graft the instrument of devolution onto the existing machinery of administration at the centre which instead would require substantial cuts.

It is now clear in Sri Lanka that real, meaningful and effective devolution alone can pave the way towards a solu-

tion to the ethnic strife between Sinhalese and Tamils. In introducing salutary and constructive devolution, the aspirations, fears and suspicions of the Muslim community have also to be catered to in a convincing manner.

Military victories alone can be useless without a political solution to the long prevailing intractable conflict between communities in Sri Lanka being simultaneously, if not earlier, introduced. Delay in effecting a political solution will only enhance further the isolation of the Northern and some of the Eastern part of the provinces from the South. Such delay can only worsen conditions since problems magnify and get more complicated.

The defence budget of Rs 38 billion for November 1995 (Rs 104 million per day) could increase to Rs 48 billion this year. This money could have been spent on schools, hospitals and irrigation works rather than on ruinous and avoidable military expenditure.

Military development means brutalisation of society and also the threat of militarisation of the government itself. Sri Lanka can never endure or experience such a prospect. Instead, it is far, far better to be magnanimous to the minority peoples as the majority peoples in South Africa have been under the great statesman, Nelson Mandela. ●

Lanka Adopts Rights Protocol

The Sri Lankan government has approved a scheme to allow any aggrieved person in the island to appeal directly to a United Nations Committee if they had any complaints of human rights violations.

The cabinet agreed to ratify and become a signatory to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that would allow appeals to the United Nations Human Rights Committee by individuals suffering violations of human rights.

Human rights organisations both lo-

cal and international, have been urging the adoption of the Optional Protocol by previous United National Party regime which ruled the country for over fifteen years during which widespread and unprecedented scale of human rights abuses, including arbitrary killings and "disappearances" of tens of thousands of persons occurred.

Even the rather belated action of the present government to adopt the Protocol has welcomed by all human rights organisations inside and outside the country. □

Suicide Attack Foiled

Two suspected Tamil Tigers dressed as schoolboys tried to ride bicycles laden with explosives into a government rally on 15 August, and were shot and killed by police. They were intercepted just hours before the arrival of two cabinet ministers at the meeting in Kalmunai in the eastern province, according to military sources. However, the LTTE denied the allegation that it was involved in any attempted assassination of the Ministers.

Wearing white school uniforms, the two rebels tried to speed pass a checkpoint where police were searching those going into the rally, the officials said. Police later found explosives hidden in the hollow metal frames of the bicycles.

The incident occurred before Shipping Minister Mohammed Ashroff and Health Minister Mohammed Fowzie arrived at the rally. Ashroff heads the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, a key ally of the governing People's Alliance, and also supervises relief operations in war zones. □

'WE WANT TO GO HOME, WE ARE NOT REFUGEES'

By Pearl Thevanayagam

Loganathan Dharmadevi, 41, left her hometown of Thirunelveli with her 20 year old son and 25 year old disabled daughter when Operation Riviresa of the Government forces began to capture Jaffna Peninsula. The family walked 10 miles and reached Kilaly after paying Rs 200 bus fare the rest of the way. They crossed the lagoon by boat and entered Kilinochchi on 3 November 1995. They then settled in Jayanthinagar.

After eight months Operation Sathjaya began with the christening by mortar shells and aerial bombardments on 16 July 1996.

The sounds of war were heard first around 7am on 26 July and the family fled to Vattakachchi eight miles from Kilinochchi Town. They arrived four days later to Visvadamu. On 19 August, they reached Thandikulam.

Dharmadevi told Weekend Express, AA at the checkpoint, the soldiers treated us like dogs. 'Angalai po. (Move over there). Kewile nillada (stay in the queue) - this to my son. Then they told us to assemble at a place and finally we were brought in vehicles to this place.'

The criteria for securing a place at Nelukulam Kalaimahal Maha Vithiyalayam in Vavuniya is as follows:

1. A family or individual should have arrived at Thandikulam through the LTTE checkpoint at Omanthai after Operation Sathjaya.
2. The family should consist of at least one youth between the ages of thirteen and forty irrespective of sex.
3. They should have the wherewithal to proceed to North or South from Vavuniya.
4. They need clearance by the checkpoint military intelligence and certified as having passed through LTTE hands.
5. The family is suspect.

Welcome to the world of the displaced at Nelukulam who resemble neither the refugees in war torn Bosnia nor the dying and the destitute of the so-called third world countries.

Perhaps the people at Nelukulam are better-fed than they were back in Kilinochchi under LTTE control; meals arrive on time in paper-wrapped parcels and the caterer engaged by the government is doing good business feeding the 420 families there. Eight toilets of the school-turned-displacement centre serve their bodily needs and the toilets are overflowing. A tube well in the vicinity

and two water tanks provide them with water. But water would become a serious problem since Vavuniya is experiencing scarcity of water.

Large bowsers bring water to the centre but since there is no supervision (no personnel to regulate wastage or overbathing) some enjoy more baths to the deprivation of others who are disabled, invalid or aged.

Adolescents play cards to while away their time. The elderly sit around staring into empty space. The children are making friends and playing truant from schools.

"Why are we here? All we wanted to do was to go back to Jaffna or to Colombo or even stay in Vavuniya itself. We sold everything we had so that we could find a place to live outside Kilinochchi." was the lament on everyone's lips.

The Government Agent of Vavuniya, K Ganesh, is forming out close upon 10,000 rupees daily to feed the 1,200 persons out of Rehabilitation Ministry funds. All because the security forces have serendipitous hopes of bagging an LTTEier among the inmates of Nelukulam.

Although relieved to be out of Kilinochchi, which has turned into a desolate cemetery not unlike Jaffna after the Government forces scored a major victory in capturing it and shooing out the LTTE, the people have become prisoners once more.

The Officer-in-Charge of Nelukulam Camp, Sunny Silva, beams widely and greets his visitors, the Weekend Express, two ICRC representatives and the Superintendent of Vavuniya Police, Wasantha Meegoda, on Monday 26 August. Of course, the Weekend Express had nothing to do with the ICRC representatives. The former had to get clearance from the Defence Ministry, Vavuniya military commander, Nanda Malawarachchi, and finally the Vavuniya Police. The ICRC has ready access to these camps since it facilitates communication among the displaced, military and the LTTE.

The instructions rather than request of the ICRC to the OIC are clear. "We want you to arrange someone to fill out these forms and get their particulars; names of each family member and their relatives who need to be contacted."

"Yes, yes. Do you want the particulars now, or are you coming back for them?" OIC Sunny asks.

Now. While we are here. Organise someone to take charge and we will wait. We will send messages to the relatives or acquaintances of these families who need to know these families are here," said one of the ICRC persons who speaks all three languages fluently and handed out a bundle of printed forms.

OIC Sunny thereupon beckons a Woman Police Constable and sends her out to find an educated man to undertake information-gathering.

She was not to have any difficulty in finding one among the inmates for there are engineers, accountants, Government clerks, education officers, teachers and you name it, there they were. The educated ones are housed among less educated ones and all have one thing in common; they want to get out of the wretched place.

Exit the ICRC and the OIC turns his attention towards the Weekend Express.

How long are they going to be here?

"We have not had any instructions to allow them out. But we give four hour passes twice daily to go into town for two sets of people," replied OIC Sunny.

The officer who hails from Matala has to do his compulsory stint in the North or East for six months; he has completed four months and two to go.

"But," he said, "I am getting a total of Rs 2,500 risk allowance. Only thing is I miss my wife and kids. Anyway there is less violence here. No brawls, no land disputes or such things."

There are no communication facilities and the centre is down a beaten path at least a quarter of a mile from the main road. Those with passes have to trek this distance to board a bus to get to Vavuniya Town.

An international aid worker whom Weekend Express spoke to regularly travels round the Wannai region comprising Mannar, Kilinochchi, Mullaithivu and Vavuniya meeting with both Government officials and the LTTE. Whether you like it or not there is no way you can attend to the needs of the people in LTTE controlled areas and displacement camps without LTTE co-operation.

According to this worker, the government's priority is to stop the panic exodus of people from Mannar and Kalpitiya to India by boats purportedly arranged by the LTTE and fishermen.

"Our information is that the LTTE is asking these people to flee to India. It could very well be that the LTTE is trying to prove you cannot live in Government controlled areas. Who knows. But the actions of the police force are not at all helping to curb the exodus. You can-

(contd. on page 29)

Topics in Focus

US Involvement

The extent of US support for the Sri Lankan government in its "war" against the Tamil Tigers and whether the LTTE should be banned in the island have been two topics which have occupied substantial space in newspapers and magazines in recent months.

Mark Kaufman of the Philadelphia Inquirer in an article published in the Dallas Morning News of 30 June 1996 (Tamil Times, July 96) let the cat out of the bag to public view by giving details of the involvement US Green Berets providing training at Wirawela in Sri Lanka. The publicity following this article's appearance would appear to have caused unexpected embarrassment to the US authorities. There were evasive, but strenuous denials from the US State Department. On the other hand, the LTTE issued a statement condemning the US stance of assisting the Sri Lankan regime and urged Washington to remain neutral and to use its influence to mediate a solution to the ethnic conflict in the island.

A news despatch datelined 16 August quoted the U.S. Army as saying that it did not intend to get involved in Sri Lanka's 13-year-old ethnic war. The Hawaii-based U.S. Pacific Command, responding to recent media speculation that the United States had stepped up defence cooperation with the Sri Lankan government, said in a statement its relations with the local army remained confined to "routine military-to-military co-operation."

"We emphasise that United States armed forces have not been, and will not be, involved in the current conflict," it said in a statement.

The U.S. army statement said four U.S. non-commissioned officers recently assisted the Sri Lankan army in its efforts to develop a non-commissioned officer education system. "At no time have American service members been involved in combat operations in Sri Lanka," it added. "All activities related to the training events took place well away from the areas of active military operations."

The Voice of America in a report datelined 16 August said that military authorities in the United States have denied media reports that defence co-operation with Sri Lanka has been

stepped up. In a statement at the US Pacific Command in Hawaii a military spokesman said relations with Sri Lanka were confined to routine military co-operation and were not likely to change.

The VoA report added that speculation had been rising about the level of US military involvement in the island. Media reports by local and foreign journalists have accused Washington of shifting the emphasis of its long standing military training program on the island. The arrival of several US military trainers earlier this year sparked widespread controversy when it was alleged that they would be giving limited combat training to Sri Lankan troops.

Quoting the statement from Pacific Command the report said training was only focused on logistical skills, leadership, safety and navigation and that US personnel had never been involved in any combat operations on the island and stressed that Washington had no intention of becoming involved in the Sri Lankan conflict.

US diplomats also denied media reports that Washington has authorised the sale of lethal equipment to Sri Lankan military forces.

Whether the US is selling lethal weapons to Sri Lanka or not, the visit of an eight-member U.S. team which included officials from several law enforcement agencies involved in counter-terrorism, but declined to name them led by the U.S. State Department Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Philip Wilcox, has been cited by defence analysts as evidence of increased US involvement in the island's security matters particularly concerning "terrorist attacks" by the LTTE upon spectacular targets in the south of the country. They also feel that the previously adopted US's arm's length stance was revised and new strategy favouring the government of Sri Lanka came to be adopted following the LTTE's unilateral withdrawal from the peace process and resuming the war in April last year, and more so after the devastating bomb attack upon the country's Central Bank complex.

Whatever may be the reason for the change in the US stance, the fact

is that it was the first time a U.S. team had visited Sri Lanka to discuss counter-terrorism. Following a series of classified meetings with Sri Lankan authorities during their four-day visit which ended on 21 August, officials in Colombo who wanted to remain anonymous said that the United States had promised to use every legal means to prevent American soil from being used to plan or carry out terrorist acts against Sri Lanka.

"The visit provided an opportunity to explore concerns shared by the United States and Sri Lanka about the scourge of terrorism," said a statement released 23 August by Sri Lanka's Foreign Ministry.

"The United States government sympathised with the current predicament Sri Lanka was facing" and "would do all within its prevailing legal framework to prevent the use of American soil to perpetrate violence against the democratic government of Sri Lanka."

Political analysts believe that the US's change in its stance reflects also the change in the attitude of some western countries towards the Tamil Tigers. For example, the Canadian and Swiss government which had been quite sympathetic to the cause of the Tamils and allowed the LTTE and its known front organisations an almost a free hand to carry on their activities began to adopt harder line. In Canada, Surest allegedly a well known LTTE activist there, has been charged with being associated with a "terrorist organisation" and the trial on charges which may result in his deportation out of Canada is now in progress. Again in Switzerland, Muralidharan and some others allegedly on charges of enforced collection of funds for the LTTE have been in detained in custody.

To Ban or Not

In the meantime, not for the first time, Sri Lankan newspapers have raised the issue of the proscription of the LTTE in a sustained manner in the wake of some well researched articles in journals such as "Asia Week" and McLeans magazine. The Asia Week article titled "LTTE International" purported to give details of the LTTE's arms-buying network across Asia and claimed that the LTTE received \$2 million a month income from taxing the Tamil expatriate community in western countries.

The McLean magazine articles

have highlighted the LTTE's dominance of the 12,000 Tamil refugees in Canada and alleges that at least 10,000 Tamil Tigers have entered Canada under false pretences. Connections have also been made to dealing in illegal drug and arms. The Sri Lankan newspapers, primarily privately owned and perceived to be anti-government have lost no time in reproducing these articles

The Colombo government has also during the past several months pressing particularly western governments either to proscribe or curtail alleged LTTE or pro-Tiger activities in their countries. In the aftermath of the much publicised global summit of foreign and security ministers at Lyons France held July this year on the subject of combating terrorism, Colombo had hoped that its pleas to western governments to curtail pro-LTTE activities would at last be heeded. But very little happened.

Some argued that unless the LTTE is banned in Sri Lanka, one cannot expect foreign governments to ban it, and so the campaign in the media for its ban has developed into a near hysteria. So much so the Sunday Island columnist Probate Sahabandu in one of his recent pieces said, "It is surprising that a government that goes for the jugular of Opposition politicians at the drop of a hat over trivial issues has refused to ban a terrorist organisation like the LTTE. How many bombs, one would be justified in asking, should go off in Colombo or how many more should be killed before the LTTE is banned in Sri Lanka. For India, which created and nurtured LTTE terrorism, assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was reason to proscribe the LTTE as a terrorist organisation. Why Sri Lanka, which has lost many more leaders including thousands of civilians at the hands of terrorists dilly-dallies on this issue escape's one's comprehension."

This sustained campaign by the local media seems to have had an impact in government circles and it has been reported that the cabinet too had been considering the question of banning the LTTE and it had sought the opinion of non-LTTE Tamil parties for their views.

Some within the government concede that the ban would not produce any immediate practical impact on the activities of the LTTE, but they argue that it would give Colombo the leverage to pressure foreign governments

to curb LTTE activities within their countries. Others argue against the ban on the ground that such action would destroy any chance of resuming negotiations with the LTTE to bring an end to the prolonged ethnic conflict.

The issue of curtailing LTTE activities abroad came to the forefront during the recent visit of Britain's Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind. He quickly dampened expectations that his government would take any action to curtail LTTE activities in the UK. Rifkind said Britain respected political freedom and ruled out any crackdown on the LTTE's political activities even if the Sri Lankan government decided to ban the group.

Speaking at a Colombo dinner hosted by the Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry, Rifkind said, "I should like to take this opportunity unreservedly to condemn the LTTE for its terrorist atrocities in Colombo and

elsewhere in Sri Lanka over the past twelve months," he said. "Britain's policy towards Sri Lanka has one overriding objective - to help the people of this island work out a stable, fair and permanent solution to their differences," he said. "That must emerge from negotiations." "We have great sympathy with the people of Sri Lanka because we also, in Britain, have been victims of terrorism. We also have a terrorist organisation that has destroyed innocent lives and brought damage and destruction to innocent people in pursuit of their political objectives."

"There are in London many people from many countries around the world who have their political differences with their governments," Rifkind said. "Tamilis, like anyone from any country, must obey British law that prohibits support of terrorism. "If they simply express political views, that is their right in a country that believes in free speech. If they have a building or an office the law cannot prevent them from doing so," Rifkind said. "We have to act in London according to British law, and the law acts as a result of a decision taken by individuals, not by organisations."

The non-LTTE Tamil parties may not have much love for the LTTE, but their views appear to be against any ban on the LTTE. Dharmalingam Sidharthan, MP and leader of the Democratic People's Liberation Front, confirming that the government had asked his party for an opinion on out-

lawing the LTTE, "We said we don't see any benefit since the ground reality will remain the same whether they are banned or not," adding that such action would give the impression that the government "is no longer interested in peace talks." Siddharthan also said a ban would have little impact on the LTTE's military strength or its overseas activities.

Rauf Hakeem of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) said that banning the LTTE was not the solution for the problem. "It's only the symptom of the problem. But the disease will remain. The SLMC strongly feels that the LTTE should be defeated militarily. Banning the LTTE will only mean that they would operate underground as in other countries."

The TULF is also opposed to the proposal. It's Batticaloa MP, Joseph Pararajasingham said the ban would close the doors for any discussions. EPRLF leader Suresh Premachandran said that banning the LTTE would not stop the international help they receive now. "The have their own offices which are functioning very successfully. The ban would not stop them getting support and money from Tamils living countries like Britain, France and Canada," he added.

Jehan Perera of the National Peace Council writing in the Sunday Island expressing opposition to the proposal to ban the LTTE said, "Banning the LTTE in the hope that this formidable army will be weakened, is to emulate the ostrich who, it is said, buries its head in the sand so that it may not see its enemy. In 1979 also the then government manned the LTTE and similar organisations, but that did nothing to end the problem of terrorism or the civil war. In 1983 the government further banned separatism with the 6th Amendment to the Constitution, but that too did not lead to any improvement in the situation. On the contrary, it may have worsened the situation by driving the democratically elected Tamil political leadership out of parliament....By banning the LTTE, the government will once again be denying the LTTE the parity they aspire to, and will be further demonising it. It is likely that the LTTE's response will be in the form of more terrorism. Conflict resolution theory would advocate instead a legitimisation of the LTTE and an accompanying strategy to ensure that they live up to their upgraded status by renouncing the use of terrorism." ●

This report mainly covers the situation in Jaffna during the four months following the mass return of refugees to Valikamam. Though the security forces had shown a refreshing level of care in Jaffna, cases of human rights violations continue to be covered up and the Government remains unaccountable for many of their actions. The LTTE remains determined to block any attempt at peace or rebuilding, focusing their efforts on selective assassinations and executions. A political vacuum hence exists, where the people of Jaffna struggle to deal with the past cycle of terror and the resulting present environment of cynicism.

In the 2 1/2 months following the return of civilians to Jaffna in April 1996, the armed forces had been surprisingly accommodating in their relations with civilians. A concern for civilian safety has been demonstrated and harassment has decreased substantially. When the LTTE has attacked security forces, the traditional knee-jerk reaction of reprisal killings of civilians has largely not occurred. There is concern around the question of how long this restrained behaviour will continue, following the loss of Mullaitivu at the end of July and recognizing the fact that unauthorized arrests increased dramatically in Jaffna after the July 4th incident where the LTTE made an attempt on a minister's life.

Cases of unauthorized arrests, beatings, torture and killings by the security forces continue nonetheless, and have become notably worse after Mullaitivu. Several incidents of rape also have been reported. Arrest receipts are not being issued and the detainment of prisoners is most often denied. In situations such as the rape and killing of civilians in Manthuvil in May, the Government simply blamed the LTTE. There is a very serious concern that the failed terror methods used in the past as well as the infamous white van abductions and killings are going to be introduced again. Units who were involved in these activities are still at large in the security services and there is strong testimony to the sighting in Jaffna of the white van in recent times. Correspondingly, there is a rising incidence of missing persons.

While the situation in Vadamaratchy remains hopeful, the current physical insecurity reawakens in Valikamam memories of the early days of state repression from July 1979. The level of unchecked indiscipline in Thenmaratchy is substantially worse - 20 homicides, mostly attributed to the Army, having been recorded by mid-August.

Any feeling of security on behalf of the people of Jaffna has been shattered by LTTE assassinations and provocations. Many who have returned gestures of goodwill towards members of the army have

Jaffna: The Contest Between Man and the Beast Within

met their fate after being labelled as 'traitors' by the LTTE. Civilians continue to be used as cover when LTTE cadres have rolled grenades through food queues, for example, in the direction of security personnel. Extra-judicial executions occur after desperate efforts to gain any form of public support, fail.

The Government has taken many urgent steps to supply essentials to the Jaffna community, an ordeal complicated by the lack of any land route to the area. Still, the commitment to providing food and medical supplies has been lacking in substance. At least initially, local administrators have been accused of racketeering in

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partnership with some members of the security forces. In its paranoia, the government has refused to utilize the capabilities of professionals and NGOs, a solid medical staff being desperately needed at Jaffna Hospital. In some cases, the army had underestimated and lost control of returning groups of refugees, resulting in shortage of supplies, LTTE infiltration and injury from remaining landmines.

Jaffna remains a closed community. While the Government continues to restrict access to the media, the LTTE uses terror to weed out public criticism and all initiative for the common good essential for the revitalisation of the community. Children still grow up knowing nothing other than their violent surroundings. The result is a deeply traumatized and worn down society.

Refugees remaining in the Vanni, who have been displaced over and over again by either the security forces or the LTTE, do not see a caring government. The recent push towards Killinochchi by the army is further exacerbating the problem. In many cases, the bombings have been interpreted as direct attacks on civilians, the LTTE being nowhere near the refugee camps. Such occurrences offer a dark reminder of the bombings near the Church at Navalay and near the school at Nagar Kovil in 1995, a clear attack on civilians which the government remains unaccountable for.

The people of Jaffna need recognition

and restoration of the freedom to empower themselves through collective political action. The once heralded education system of Jaffna must be immediately rebuilt from the ground up. The government must end its meaningless policy of censorship and facilitate freedom of movement, despite the logistical problems, between Jaffna and the outside world at least by allowing journalists and other groups to visit more frequently. All parties must take full responsibility for their actions and demonstrate the will to aid legitimately and honestly in the renewal of the community. Not only the survival of Jaffna's citizens be established and asserted, but also their integrity, dignity and humanity respected.

Jaffna: The Contest Between Man and the Beast Within

1. Introduction

The main task confronting the people of Jaffna, those who wish them well and the thousands of members of the security forces who have shown remarkable restraint, is to keep alive those high hopes which once kindled expectations afresh and are now under a cloud. Events from the time we brought out our Special Report (NO.6) on the Exodus from Jaffna during October/November 1995 up to the end of June this year, have been amply covered in the press. In a new departure two of the newspapers even reported the incident in Manthuvil of 17th May where three women had been raped by members of the army and four others were killed. We have also given below the situation during the first two months after the return of civilians to Valikamam which was written just before the 4th July incident, complementing what has appeared in the press. Our main concern has been that there was very little politically, institutionally and administratively to sustain the high expectations in Jaffna.

As regards immediate needs such as food distribution and the restarting of agriculture, remedial measures have been making slow but steady progress. Most disturbing is the political vacuum. The political task was to help the people to overcome the legacy of state oppression as well as nearly a decade of terror and totalitarian control directly by or under the shadow of the LTTE. The natural temptation of certain sections in the government and media is to take a patronising approach where it is sought to project the Tamils as anti-LTTE while playing down the fact that the Tamils too have some awkward and legitimate political aspirations that are integral to their self-respect.

As for maintaining a disciplined approach by the armed forces, the brunt of

the responsibility quite unrealistically rests on the Forces themselves. Several crimes where army personnel have been implicated in murder, rape or robbery, particularly in the Chavakacheri AGA Division, have been covered up. Although there was willingness on the part of some army officers to check what had happened, no pressure was brought to bear on them by the political establishment or any other appropriate institution to do a thorough investigation and punish the culprits. The recent speech by the Deputy Defence Minister in parliament that there was not a single rape incident during the recent military operations under the PA Government, points to serious lapses on the part of the political establishment.

The people need to see that there are monitoring bodies with teeth, involving civilian volunteers and officials, that are in place and do the job effectively. This is particularly so because Jaffna remains largely cut off and the local population will remain inert for some time.

This concern is highlighted by two events in July that ended 2 1/2 months of very cordial relations between the people and the armed forces causing new tensions, a freezing of the atmosphere and even worse. The first was the suicide bomb attack in Jaffna town on 4th July, and the second the over-running of the Mullaitivu army camp by the LTTE on 19th July with huge loss of life on both sides.

July, 1996: A Disturbing Turn

On 4th July Nimal Siripala de Silva, Minister of Housing & Construction was visiting Jaffna in connection with the rehabilitation programme. Later in the morning, shortly after he had declared open a much needed sales outlet of the Building Materials Corporation on Stanley Road, Jaffna, a suicide bomber blew herself up killing several people. Among those killed during the incident and its aftermath were Brigadier Ananda Hamangoda, the Town Commandant, and Carlyle Dias, a retired DIG of Police assigned to run the civil administration.

The loss of these two men left a void that is deeply felt by the civilian population. The former who had been up and about meeting people and listening to them was immensely popular. The latter was closely studying the problems and had impressed those who talked to him by his enlightened approach. He also understood the importance of independent bodies to monitor the behaviour of the armed forces. Once again the Government failed them in what they were trying to achieve by not telling the whole truth about the incident. The media coverage largely centred around statements by the official military spokesman and interviews with the minister who had sustained injuries.

It is now widely known in Jaffna that several of the 20 or so deaths from the incident resulted from firing by soldiers after the suicide bomb explosion. In the first

instance soldiers covering the minister's visit had fired from the two ends of Stanley Road. Once the sound of the explosion was heard, people in the bazaar area ran across the bus stand towards Clock Tower Road. Again they were fired upon by soldiers guarding the area. Others close to the scene took to hiding in the neighbourhood. Soldiers searching the area came across three students whom they pulled out and shot, killing two. The injured student along with several others was admitted to Ward 30 of the Jaffna Teaching Hospital.

A most ironical fact which was suppressed was that ex-DIG Carlyle Dias was killed by army firing. Following the bomb explosion he lay flat on the ground along with some government officials. His last words reflected his sense of duty: "I must go and see what happened to the minister". Having said this he stood up and met his fate in doing so.

This unprofessional activity of the soldiers was however quickly brought under control by officers. The people did not blame the soldiers much for it. They took it as a response to what the soldiers mistook for a wider LTTE attack instead of a suicidal attack by one person. There was a problem in that the Army had not been trained to anticipate and react to such contingencies. By not telling the truth and holding an inquiry to formulate remedial measures for the future, the problem was being buried. And surely the family of Carlyle Dias deserves to have his heroism placed on record rather than have it suppressed for the sake of mistaken expediency.

The habit of burying problems along with the truth was taking its toll on the Government's credibility while leaving behind fertile ground for the growth of resentment. Serious instances of this concern the clumsy attempt to shift the blame for the case of murder, accompanied by rape and robbery in Manthuvil onto the LTTE (see Reports below) and the continuing problem with aerial bombing in operational areas (see last section).

The immediate effect of the 4th July incident was that the soldiers became more tense than before. This may have blown over had it not been for the disaster in Mullaitivu two weeks later. Still, for much of the time things appeared to be normal, but checks became tighter and people began to experience a higher incidence of rudeness at check-points.

More serious was the unseen and little noticed aspect of things. Previously the Army had been almost indifferent to any LTTE presence even when alerted by members of the public. Following 4th July, the Army began making several arrests. Within a short period about 17 arrests were made in Ariyalai, a suburb to the east of Jaffna City. On one day up to 25 youths were brought to Jaffna from Chavakacheri for questioning. Most of those detained were released after a few days, but complained of torture.

Even more disturbing is that formal receipts for arrest are not being issued to the families as is now the accepted practice in the East. Several instances have been brought to our notice where even in the case of those not released, the arrest has been denied, and more ironically, inquiring family members or guardians have been told by the Army that if they had made the arrest they would have issued a receipt. This was how even educated Jaffna folk came to know of the legal obligation of the Army to issue a receipt and their right to obtain one (see Reports below).

Of greater concern is the appearance in Jaffna of the dreaded white van, a phenomenon we have had occasion to report on in the East, particularly during 1990/91. It has been associated with names like Suresh Hashim in Trincomalee and Munas in Batticaloa, both terror-operators associated with the armed forces. It made its appearance in Kallar in December in 1990 and it was also involved with the operation in Colombo last year with which the STF was associated, leading to corpses in lakes. Although not so far widely known, we have firm testimony to its manifestation in Jaffna.

It was as though the Army suddenly woke up from complacency in the face of repeated warnings by the public, and decided to deploy some alienating methods involving terror. Although things are still far better than the terror that once obtained in the East and still continues there at a low ebb, the terror and death symbolism of the white van in Jaffna represents an unhealthy mental shift.

What the Mullaitivu disaster may mean for the detainees is suggested by the experience of about 26 youths detained by the Army during the early stages of military operation late last year. They were mainly persons who went back to their homes in areas recently occupied by the Army to fetch some of their family's belongings. They were kept chained under the custody of the Military Police and were subject to regular beating. The beating however stopped abruptly on the 5th of December 1995 - the day the Army took control of Jaffna. It was as though the Army had suddenly proved their own worth as soldiers and had earned their self-respect. It had in consequence become mean and unbecoming for them to beat people in order to get over their sense of failure and inferiority. They were now prepared to think professionally and take death as a matter of course. It seems to be that Mullaitivu on the other hand went some way towards reversing this positive development by taking away their self-esteem. Even most of the recent bombing and shelling in the operational areas of the Vanni strongly suggest that more than for any military purpose they were done merely to vent their anger.

The almost total absence of institutional safeguards for detainees in Jaffna leaves room for some of the worst fears.

The facts in our reports below present what was indeed, by mid-August, a very grim picture. In the Thenmaratchy (Chavakacheri) Division there have been at least 20 recorded homicides since the Army's takeover in April, with the Army implicated in more than 80% of them. The latter have generally involved rape or robbery. Routine torture of detainees includes some of the worst practices recorded in the annals of the Sri Lankan Army, often leading to permanent physical and psychic impairment, which one had only a few months earlier dared to hope, were things of the past. The case of missing persons may yet be numerically small in comparison with the worst episodes in this country. But the ease with which it could happen, with blatant denials even in cases publicly witnessed, is truly alarming. Despite some disturbing trends, the situation in Vadamaratchi however remains more hopeful.

Quite independently, the LTTE was doing its own thing to enforce a regime of terror in one of its most dreadful aspects—through selective assassination. A poignant instance is the killing on the streets of a middle-aged mother, Sivayogini Patkunanikkam. Her only known crime was that she was among those who defied the LTTE's order to vacate Jaffna on 30th October 1995, and was cordial towards the security forces. The reasoning of those who stayed behind was pretty sound, as the current suffering of refugees in the Vanni amplifies. They knew that once they left Valikamam with no prospect of returning home, they would be herded from place to place by the LTTE as vagrants with every new military operation. If they had to defy the LTTE at some point, now was a good time to start. Ultimately the 400,000 who 'turned their backs on the LTTE' followed the same line of reasoning after their first displacement by refusing a further displacement into the Vanni. The pioneers thus remained more vulnerable when the LTTE wanted to make an example of someone.

The message was only too clear to the people of Jaffna (see Reports). Those who were looking for a happier turn of events for the terror-ridden society felt very angry with their 'Liberators'. For once people had felt free — free of bombing and shelling, freer to associate, to think, to speak and even to an extent free from the fear of the security forces — and then the LTTE had to bring back this fear one again!

An expert on its effects, particularly when there is no organisational structure to counter it, described fear in its internal manifestation as poison of the deadliest kind. It spills over into all relationships where habitual dissembling becomes the norm - partly as a means of turning the tables on the authors of the fear. A highly respected teacher who constantly irritated his intimate circles with contradictory remarks observed defiantly, "No one will ever know what my real feelings are!" There is a general flight from reason.

Sadly, experts from military analysts to political commentators write about the situation purely to push their line without any serious analysis about the real plight of the people.

Jaffna: The Return

(This section was written at the end of June 1996)

(Mid -April - June '96)

Jaffna has become a desolate and forlorn place. The once ghost town of the early part of the year is slowly filling with people - people who are perhaps ghosts of the once proud indigenous, thrifty and active folk who they once were. The whole infrastructure and much of the rest has also been destroyed. To rebuild is going to be a slow and painful process. But the returnees appear to have lost their zest for life, the desire and motivation to do something, to start again from the ashes. Rather, they spend the days standing in long queues hoping for whatever rations they may get, and they appear exhausted with grim faces: Staring ahead, no smile on their faces worn down by uncertainty and apathy - more like the 'survivor syndrome' described by Lifton after Hiroshima as "a pervasive tendency to sluggish despair ..." They seemed to live a half life, as though they are "walking corpses" or the "living dead" (Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima (1967))

The effects on society of massive destruction and disruption have been called 'loss of community' by Lai Erikson (American Journal of Psychiatry, 1976). This results in demoralisation, disorientation and loss of connections. The trauma of the exodus, the rigours and hardships of refugee life, the emptiness of returning to a looted and damaged house and the seemingly insurmountable obstacles to picking up the thread of life once again, are all elements contributing to their sluggish despair.

True, they will freely admit, there is an overwhelming sense of relief at having returned to their homes, Land, Ur (village) and it is a thousand times better than the erstwhile refugee life - living in crowded makeshift shelters, the struggle for water and food, and days spent in empty idleness. "Never again" they say will they leave... "better to be shot dead in our own home". A major shock for most returnees was the destroyed and damaged houses owing to fighting in their areas. Looting of all valuables from clothes to kitchen utensils had been widespread. Doors and windows had been smashed open and personal belongings thrown on the floor; some thrown carelessly in the garden or exposed to the elements under broken roofs. More tragic were the landmines and other booby traps awaiting the returnees.

In the first two months more than 70 civilians were injured by such blasts, usually losing a leg; many of them were children. Some died. Not much has been done to clear the mines for the returnees. In general they were left to their own devices like

using a rake to detect the mines while sophisticated mine detecting equipment is available internationally.

The life of the community has been stifled. There is little social or cultural celebration, or gathering. The streets are deserted by dusk even in the so called 'uncleared' areas where there is no curfew. School attendance is low but picking up and is now (August) high in Jaffna Town. Few people have started their temple festivals and bhakti songs can be heard over loudspeakers once again. There is talk of the Nallur festival being a grand one. Some are expecting the Army to have a big hand in it this year.

During this period when people were returning to their homes, the Army's behaviour has been unimpeachable except for a few 'lapses' (see Reports). The troops have been over-friendly, even condescending, cracking jokes, giving a hand to the old and feeble, talking politely and apologizing for the inconveniences caused. When a grenade is thrown by the militants killing a few soldiers, they first ask the civilians to lie down or take cover before opening fire. The big change in the Army's behaviour is epitomised by the loss of fear and tension that in the past led to atrocities - the knee jerk reaction that the LTTE could always count on in carrying out a guerilla attack and vanishing, following which the Army would go on a rampage killing civilians - no longer seemed to work so far!

The LTTE was trying its best to provoke the Army to the utmost such as by rolling a grenade through crowds waiting at check points or queuing for rations. But the army always seemed take it coolly despite the death and injury to their comrades. They first made sure of the safety of civilians, even telling them not to feel afraid. This was not the army the civilians had come to know in bygone years. The other remarkable change was the confidence and nonchalant behaviour. They cycled around in groups and alone with or without arms. The method of cycling indicated that they were not habitual cyclists like the Jaffna man. They cracked jokes, played with children, helped the elderly and disabled. It was all amazing. As a soldier checked our reporter's bag at one of the innumerable check points dotting each of the cross roads within Jaffna town, he apologized, "Sorry, we never had to do this before but the LTTE has just thrown a grenade today killing a soldier, so now the orders are to check every bag". Again at another check point where one had to get down and walk, a soldier said with a smile, "Only we are giving trouble, no trouble with the LTTE, no?"

The question foremost in the people's mind at that time was, how long is this good behaviour going to last in the face of the LTTE trying everything in the book to provoke the standard pattern of reprisals? Their political sustenance after all depends on this reaction. When will the mask come off to reveal the real 'beast' within, which

the people have so often in the past been accustomed to expect? By their own admission, the soldiers are constantly instructed 'not to harm the civilians', 'be good to the civilians', 'our task is to fight the LTTE' and so on. During the military operations Riviresa (Sunshine) II & III these orders kept coming over the armed forces radio every few hours. In the evenings there are meetings for every group with senior officers going over the day's events where public relations featured prominently. The Government well realizes that the course of the ethnic war will be determined by this winning and keeping the hearts and minds of the people. The Army and Police are much friendlier with the Tamil civilians, even trying to learn the language from children. This is in sharp contrast for example to what prevails in Colombo or Vavuniya and definitely the East, where only last February a large scale massacre of civilians took place.

Expectations and Performance

Among the main problems after the return of civilians in April was the shortage and distribution of essentials that had gradually eased significantly by July-end after the Government took urgent steps to increase the supply. During the time of shortages the local civil administration was widely accused of racketeering in collusion with sections of the security forces.

Since the government's supply of rations came by ship, it was difficult to supply the whole population. Moreover, the cargo ships the government has are relatively small and have to be escorted by the Navy. The ICRC's effort to supply overland food and other essential items had met with the LTTE's refusal. (The ICRC is dependent on both parties agreeing to whatever it wants to do.) During the early weeks a whole underground system of black market had come up overnight. There were long queues starting at 3 a.m. at the only Sathosa outlet in Jaffna. Traders and individual entrepreneurs bought up the daily stock to re-sell it at immense profits outside. Thus for example the popular red rice selling at Rs. 26 a kg at Sathosa fetched up to Rs. 100 on the outside market. The less popular rice sold at Rs 50 a kg.

At present rice, sugar and dhal which are rationed items are generally available at the normal price at designated outlets and are part of the normal free benefits to people classified as displaced. Kerosene is also generally available at the reasonable price of Rs 12.50 a litre. The sound of working pumps in Valikamam is a sign that agriculture is reviving. Although vegetables are in short supply, seed onions were distributed freely and a bumper crop is anticipated. The Government is also helping with the shipping of onions and tobacco to the South.

Yet considerable problems remain in distribution and communication, particularly in the 'uncleared' areas. Several leading persons in Jaffna put this down to sabotage by the LTTE which has been sending

a stream of intimidating messages to government officials. No official thus wants to appear zealously hard working or cooperative.

Other reservations concern the Government's failure to use available experienced personnel and NGOs, preferring rather to project ministers in high-profile seeming to be doing a lot. People were often put off when suddenly a place was sloppily smartened up, a minister arrived and opened something, created expectations and left, while little happened. It exposed the weakness of the Island's administration, run down over decades, and its inability to take appropriate follow-up actions. Against this one must also keep in mind that institutions like Jaffna Hospital - which was neglected by governments for a long time and functioned with minimum facilities, was later stripped by the LTTE at the end of 1995 - need all replacements to be brought by air or sea. Also following the exodus the staff-position at the hospital remains critical with hardly any specialists. More people yet want to leave Jaffna than to return.

In the matter of mine clearing again there remains the feeling that much more could have been done, even getting down special expertise.

The government has inexplicably turned down many well meant offers for help from NGOs and foreign donors. This shows how paranoid still this government machinery is. A surgeon and valuable equipment were promised by MERLIN (European). NGOs who were working in Jaffna are eager to get back but the government remains adamant in refusing such help. Many old hands can easily get the old structures back in place to begin the urgent programmes. Some have been allowed into Pt. Pedro but not Jaffna, though both are under army control. All this arouses disturbing questions on the bonafides of the Government.

Reports: Mid-November 1995 - Early August 1996

The following are meant to give the flavour of developments in Jaffna without in any way being exhaustive.

Late November - 5th December 1995: The final battle for Jaffna

Only a few hundred people remained around Jaffna town following the exodus from 30th October 1995. Of these, about 400 were at St. Patrick's Jaffna, at Matthew's and Long's Blocks, with some of those better off on the upper floor of the latter.

The LTTE tried to chase them away a few times, resulting in the people leaving through one entrance and coming back through another. Elsewhere people remained hidden in houses not daring to show themselves. They had decided to display white flags when the Army moved in. Their problem was not to do it too early when the LTTE was still around.

Earlier, as the crowds left Jaffna, some deserting LTTE cadre too had tried to min-

gle with the crowds. Witnesses saw about 4 of them being arrested and taken away. The only hint of what happened to the prisoners held by the LTTE was the sighting of about 30 unkempt persons in chains near Sattanathar Kovil, Nallur, being marched towards Chemmani and Thenmaratchy. Among the prisoners released at this time was the former chairman of the Jaffna Red Cross detained in 1993, when there was a crackdown on the supporters of former Deputy LTTE Leader Mahattaya.

As the Army approached nearer, shelling became more intense after the vacation of most civilians and the ICRC by mid-November. The shelling during the advance was not as random as the noise indicated. The Army later told civilians that certain areas had been blocked out on maps fed to computers controlling artillery pieces. In some cases this was confirmed by civilians - that certain areas were generally, but not entirely, free of shells. Some of these included certain schools and religious institutions. Still, even in such places, the Army shelled back when the LTTE shelled. Such an instance was the shell which fell near the chapel at Holy Family Convent, Jaffna, causing injury to the shoulder of Dr. Abraham. Dr. Abraham was again a victim later, this time of the suicide bomb explosion of 4th July 1996, and died while under treatment in Colombo. Mrs. Nadarajah, the wife of the Atheenam (Manager) of Nallur Kandasamy Kovil, also died when a shell fell while she was out in the compound.

At St. John's college, Jaffna, the retreating LTTE had looted most office equipment and safe, and fired shells horizontally form close range, severely damaging some buildings. The total damage to the school from the army shelling in approaching Jaffna and the LTTE's destruction is estimated at Rs. 5,000,000. Now, August 1996, the school is functioning with most of the students (1200) back, but only 60% of the staff.

During this time the LTTE was rapidly pulling out most of its cadre. Among the last to go was a large group of women who were in the area around the Chudukuli end of Hospital Road where there was a women's camp. Some of the more hardened LTTE cadre sought out civilians, threatened them and turned them out of their homes at a time of intense shelling. Some others, younger, were considerate, and advised them to show white flags after they had withdrawn and even directed them to Roman Catholic institutions in the Convent area, where a few priests had remained, including Fr. Selvarajah, the Bishop's chaplain.

One incident illustrates the kind of danger that confronted the civilians from shelling even in places of refuge, as all NGOs with radio communication had withdrawn. The information the army had was either outdated or based on intelligence reports of LTTE transmissions. In the last days the LTTE resisted from Kailasapillayar Kovil and Passaiyoor. On 1st De-

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ember the Army column moving west along the coast had an intense fire fight with the LTTE in the Passaiyoor area. An old couple, Mr & Mrs. Ponnuthurai had remained in their home near Holy Cross Nursing Home. Until 1.00 AM (2nd December) there were intense firing noises. Mr. Ponnuthurai had narrowly escaped when a piece of shrapnel from an exploding shell hit a leg of a bed on which he was seated. Another shell hit a coconut tree at their home. After 1.00 AM it became very quiet as the LTTE pulled out. In the morning the old couple came out and ran into the main group of the Army who were levelling their cannon at St. Patrick's. The couple told the commanding officer that there was a large refugee population at St. Patrick's. The officer immediately ordered the men to stop and told the couple that according to information given to them Chundukuli Girls' College 5/8 mile north of them was a refugee camp while St. Patrick's, about the same distance to the west, was an LTTE centre. While this exchange was going on, a white flag appeared out of an upstairs block at St. Patrick's. By mid-day on the 2nd December the troops were at St. Patrick's. The Army took a much destroyed Jaffna City on 5th De-

ember.

December end 1995:

Kanthal- madam: Chellappah, the owner of seven retail stores, had brought his goods home and had remained behind. He was a frequent visitor at the Nallur Atheenam's, and had been a recipient of food supplied by the Army. It also turned out that some LTTE remnants had contacted him and that he had been supplying them with pulses that had been among the supplies at his home. The rest of his family had left Valikamam. Whatever his motives, he was admittedly in an unenviable position. One day, presumably on a tip-off, the Army came to his place. About 20 members of the LTTE fled. Soldiers searching his place shot dead 3 LTTE cadre hiding in the water tank. Chellappah too was shot dead.

19th April 1996:

By 16th April much of the lagoon separating Valikamam and Thenmaratchy had dried up. The Army's incursion into Thenmaratchy on that morning had been preceded by an advance party who had walked into the fields in Navatkuli during the night. In the morning before dawn they met surprised farmers who mistook them

for the LTTE. The Army quickly advanced into Kaithady and then Chavakacheri hardly meeting resistance from the LTTE. The Army was taken aback by the favourable response of the civilian population who had resisted persistent inducements by the LTTE to move into the Vanni, where the LTTE was pulling back to.

The Army had not anticipated a large civilian population to come under their control. They had at best expected 20,000 civilians to return to Valikamam. But what resulted was a flood of returning refugees on the road to Jaffna, reaching 200,000 by early May, going up eventually to about 60% of the original population - the rest being mostly trapped under the LTTE in the Vanni. The Army lost control of the situation and decided to abandon checks on those coming so as to eliminate queues that would have taken weeks to clear.

Apart from the LTTE's infiltration two important shortcomings were a shortage of food that lasted over two months and the lack of medical facilities. Only two local doctors had remained behind to help in Jaffna Hospital - Dr. Rajasooriyar and Dr. Jegasothy - the latter being a dental surgeon.

(Continued in next issue)

(contd. from page 15)

English governess and was sent to Oxford for his higher education. In short, political power was a monopoly of the English-educated elite.

Bandaranaike's SLFP did not do too well at the first general election in 1952. For the next contest, 1956, Bandaranaike had his "magic formula", Sinhala as the only official language. Taking no chances, he promised to make it law in twenty-four hours! It took in fact several months but Bandaranaike, by no means a racist, had opened the bottle and let out the genie.

One of the first consequences of this dramatic change was the exodus of educated middle-class families. On hindsight, however, it is clear that the most important consequence was the advent of militant Tamil youth groups, all conscious of the fact that "Sinhala Only" would soon affect employment opportunities. Certainly, the public service required a knowledge of Sinhala, the official language. A predictable loss of job opportunities, and a wounded pride which nursed a righteous anger, produced Tamil separatist guerrilla groups, many trained and armed in the late 1970s by Indian covert agencies. While almost all these liberation fronts had intimate connections with New Delhi, the LTTE was a clear exception. It was a tribute to the LTTE's uncompromising nationalism.

Once the Senanayake hegemony over the conservative UNP ended through natural causes, Sri Lankan poli-

tics were left with one ruling family - the Bandaranaiques, from SWRD to her widow, Sirima, and now to her daughter, Chandrika. That left the only son of the "Founding Father", Anura Bandaranaike out in the cold. He had no choice. He joined the party that his father had quit. His place in an SLFP - dominated "People's Alliance" was taken by Colonel Anuruddha Ratwatte, a cousin of Mrs. Sirima (Ratwatte) Bandaranaike, the PA's Prime Minister. And Anurudcha was given the strategic portfolio of Irrigation, Power and Energy, together with defence - Deputy Minister of Defence directly serving President Kumaratunga, who doubles up Sri Lanka's Defence Minister.

It was in that capacity that Colonel Ratwatte got into his old uniform and visited the "battle front" when the army launched "Operation Riviresa" which was successfully concluded with the capture of Jaffna, the capital of "Eelam". But the hero of Jaffna now faces a more serious battle - a battle in the Courts of Law. He is charged with defamation, and the Bandaranaiques hope they can make it "criminal defamation" since it concerns the reputation of Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike. Tapes will be presented in Court to prove that the newly elevated General Ratwatte told a public meeting that Anura Bandaranaike is NOT the son of S W R D Bandaranaike, the revered founder of the SLFP. Prime Minister Mrs Bandaranaike may give evidence in support of her son. The Bandaranaiques are already armed with

tapes of General Ratwatte's speeches. The Tamils demand a north-and-east merged unit and Minister Ashraff of the PA insists on a separate Muslim Unit, but the basic unit of society, "the family", that governs Sri Lanka is being torn apart!

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CTBT AND KASHMIR ELECTIONS TWO DIMENSIONS OF THE INDIAN STATE

T N Gopalan

India has blocked the comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), a pact avowedly aimed at capping the nuclear weapons programmes in the entire world, a different version of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

India finds the treaty, in its present format, discriminatory and also "impinging on its own sovereignty" and hence was vetoed at the Geneva talks. Needless to say that India wants to keep its nuclear options open and so would not like to be tied down by any kind of international treaty.

Even though other nuclear threshold states like Iran and Pakistan too were not happy about certain aspects of the text, it was India which exercised its veto power, inviting flax from across the globe for blocking the passage of a treaty which could have acted as the first step towards total nuclear disarmament or at any rate put a cap on the nuclear arms race.

"We've not been isolated from the international community. Everyone understands why we were forced to use the veto power. Nor do we apprehend any sanctions against us because of our refusal to toe the line of the big five... Anyway in the final analysis, it is our national interests, our security, which should dictate our own course of action and we should be ready to stand up to any kind of international pressure while protecting our own sovereignty," says Mr I K Gujral, Minister for External Affairs.

If India's stand on the CTBT is seen as a telling assertion of the national will and a resounding slap on the self-proclaimed gendarmes of the world like the US and its cronies, the four-phase elections in Kashmir in the next few weeks, to the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly to be more precise, are supposed to reveal yet another strong and heartening facet of the Indian State - at least that is what the so-called patriotic sections, especially the media, believe and say.

The autonomy demands of the Kashmiris may not have been met and the human rights violations in the valley may go on unchecked. The militant threat might still be hovering behind the entire election process.

Still for the patriots the very fact that elections are being held is sufficiently exciting to make them all jump with joy at this march towards democratisation. They are prepared to close their eyes to the pitfalls ahead in holding elections

without offering an autonomy package and hail the Deve Gowda Government for its refusal to give in to international pressure and loosen the country's hold on this sensitive border state but at the same time taking the first tentative steps towards democracy - just as they see a principled act of statesmanship in the rejection of the CTBT, not pausing to think for a moment about the costs involved in fuelling the nuclear arms race all over again.

India proclaimed its arrival as a nuclear major (or minor?) Way back in 1974 when the Pokhran explosion was carried out. In fact that remains the only known case of test explosion by India, but it is supposed to be building its nuclear arsenal quietly since then. Unfortunately, for the allegedly patriotically inclined, the atomic weapons exercise a deadly charm. Their devastating potential seems to increase its mystique for the middle classes, for the opinion leaders, for the Indian media in general, barring some honourable exceptions.

The high economic costs of the Pokhran, the cutting off of aid from the First World and the channelling of the scarce resources into the nuclear reactor world, leaving the priority sectors like health and education high and dry, the floundering of the nuclear power establishment - power from the atom is prohibitively expensive besides having unpredictable radiation fall-out - the catastrophic possibilities involved in a nuclear arms race, especially so in such a volatile region as South Asia, nothing seems to make any difference to the pro-bomb lobby.

"We need the bomb. That is the only effective deterrent against the evil designs of Pakistan and China. And no sacrifice can be too great to attain the status of a nuclear power..." so goes the argument. No different from Mr Z A Bhutto's thundering proclamation in the seventies - "We may eat grass, but we will make the bomb..." It looks as though the poor Pakistanis are indeed eating grass today but have the 'satisfaction' of having the bomb. According to some experts it has in its possession at least a dozen atom bomb.

"Years of heavy defence spending is taking a toll of the Pakistani economy," said a recent despatch from Washington, "In the current financial year, almost 26 per cent of the total budget is to be spent on defence and 36 per cent goes towards

debt servicing... Its worsening economic condition has jeopardised its planned defence purchases..."

Mercifully the atmosphere in India is less hysterical and the politicians, not even the BJP type, are baying for the blood of the Pakistanis or Chinese all the time. Certainly there is no obsession with defence build up. In fact in the wake of liberalisation there are some muted calls for the pruning of the defence outlay.

But the bomb project, its presumed deterrent effect, the national pride involved, they are a different cup of tea altogether.

When the CTBT issue came up before the Parliament, MP's right across the spectrum urged the Government "to stand up to nuclear blackmail."

"Time has come for India to take certain concrete decisions with regard to national security," advised the old peacenik, George Fernandez in his new role as a forbidding hawk, AChina has 300 bombs. We can't afford to keep quiet. We should not succumb to pressures from the US..."

An opinion poll also revealed that a majority of the electorate not only supported the Government's stand on the CTBT but also wanted India to make the bomb.

There are many interpretations of the CTBT as discussed in Geneva and rejected by India. That the big five, the US, France, the UK, Russia and China had schemed to show up India as the villain of the piece by stipulating that the fact could become valid only if India signed it, that they were never serious about a freeze on nuclear testing and anyway their objective was to prevent the threshold states from growing too big for their shoes, etc. And India was right in demanding that the international community start working towards total nuclear disarmament.

"CTBT will certainly bring about a cessation of the nuclear arms race, which has played havoc and made the world qualitatively more insecure decade after decade. Without test explosions, the nuclear weapon states will not be able to develop new-generation weapons or modernise existing ones," feels Mr Praful Bidwai, noted journalist.

The British Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament, Michael Weston himself has conceded that the CTBT has a disarmament bite... Aleave alone build new weapons, we cannot maintain or replace old ones without elaborate explosive testing because they degrade, the tritium trigger decays rapidly..."

But then who cares. Any voice of sobriety and reason is lost in the din of

ingoism. No-one seems to be ready to distinguish between self-respect and self-destruction.

What is happening in Kashmir is yet another instance of the myopic approach of the nationalist sections. Certainly some elections, any elections, are better than no elections. Assembly elections are being held there after a gap of nine years.

Unlike the elections to the seven Lok Sabha seats held in May last year when many voters were reportedly press-ganged into voting, this time round there is going to be no arm-twisting, no coercion, say the authorities. If the Kashmiris make their way to the polling booths on their own, that in itself would be a comprehensive repudiation of the azadi cry and of the Pakistani designs, it is claimed.

Partly such a line of thinking could be right. Eight years of militancy has not made life any better for the Kashmiris. Only violence and more violence, an unending spiral. And they are as far away from azadi (freedom) as they were when it all began. Thus they could be voting with their feet.

But then the fact remains that the

Union Government has not offered anything by way of autonomy and there is no indication that the United Front Government is inclined to do so, though most of its constituents and the CPM backing it are known to be for maximum devolution of powers.

Even Farooq Abdullah, tired of waiting in the sidelines has jumped into the fray though he was insisting on a package until recently as a precondition for joining the election process.

There is generally a relaxed mood in the valley. Of the 87 seats at stake, 47 constituencies are located in Kashmir, the rest being distributed between Jamma and Ladakh where azadi is a non-issue, the two areas with not much of a Muslim population.

The militants either out of design or under pressure seem to be laying off for the moment, not seeking to disrupt the election campaign. The All party Hurriyat Conference, presumed to reflect the wishes of the Kashmiri masses are umbrella organisations most of which are for Kashmir's independence, is boycotting the poll and has gone on a systematic boycott campaign, urging the

people to Aignore the farce."

Now the question is what will happen if the elections are held, there is a reasonable voter turn-out and Farooq Abdullah's National Conference which is still popular to some extent does come to power but the Centre does not come up with a broadly acceptable autonomy package? Or a BJP Government is in place in the next couple of years and it refuses to entertain any autonomy demands.

The Kashmiris will feel betrayed. Despite all the army repression, there could be terrifying bouts of violence attracting international attention.

Farooq says, defending himself, "Deve Gowda is talking of strong states and a strong centre and that makes a world of difference."

That is the only silver-lining. But that no-one is visualising a scenario wherein the Gowdas of this country will be marginalised with serious consequences and so is demanding a package first goes to show how vacuous and complacent the liberals are turning and therein could be the danger for the Indian Union. ●

(contd. from page 19)

not deny that this attitude is pushing the people into fleeing Wannu to India," the aid worker said.

Since Operation Sathjaya, which began on 26 July, Kilinochchi Town has become deserted and completely destroyed, according to this humanitarian aid representative.

"The outskirts of Kilinochchi has around 200,000 people. People who have fled Jaffna during Operation Leap Forward in mid '95, and Operation Riviresa 1, 2 and 3 have since been coming into Akkarayan, Skandapuram, Mallavi, Mankulam and the eastern parts of Mullaitivu. In Kilinochchi business is booming since those businessmen who are relocating in the wake of military offensive are taking their businesses with them.

"But others are having a difficult time since some of them have been displaced for the 10th or 15th time and they need to get registered to get Government food and essential supplies. There are no proper centres for the displaced for registering and there's no infrastructure in Kilinochchi. All the buildings in town have disappeared," the aid worker said.

Kilinochchi had a week of rain but Vavuniya had about ten days by 25 August, according to this humanitarian worker. The fear among humanitarian workers is that since no aid or health personnel are allowed into LTTE controlled areas there is no way a tally can be kept on the lack of health care, diseases or mortalities.

But this aid worker told Weekend Express that people in LTTE controlled areas are suffering from malnutrition, diarrhoea, malaria and typhoid.

"There is definitely urgent need for shelter, food, portable (clean) water and the situation will definitely deteriorate unless some urgent measures are taken," the humanitarian worker said.

The staple food prices in Kilinochchi has risen sharply since military offensive began. Rice is sold at Rs 32, dhal Rs 40 and the overall situation is far from satisfactory, according to the aid representative.

This person pointed out that those displaced from Operation Riviresa are the most affected since they are not considered displaced. ●

(Courtesy of "Weekend Express")

(contd. from page 16)

the first time officially conceded (in the pamphlet) that the Muslims are a distinct community and that their religious, cultural and social values have to be preserved and safeguarded. This is the fundamental principle on which the SLMC built its politics sixteen years ago. Local community leaders who read the LTTE pamphlet and heard Hisbullah were of the opinion that many of the problems which bedevil the east could be resolved if the SLMC and the LTTE, out of sheer pragmatic considerations, provide each other common ground, wittingly or unwittingly, for striking a deal eventually for the mutual benefit of the Tamils and Muslims. ●

Tourism Campaign

Sri Lanka is to launch a \$4 million campaign to attract investors and tourists by stressing that a 13 year-long ethnic war has been largely limited to the country's north and east.

Media and Tourism Minister Dhamasiri Senanayake told a news conference on 22 August that the government had to counter moves by the LTTE and its supporters to tarnish Sri Lanka's image. "Presently we suffer from a problem of disinformation," he said. "These reports are exaggerated."

Tourist arrivals to the island dropped by 39.6 percent in April from a year ago, the Ceylon Tourist Board said. Sri Lanka had 403,101 tourists last year.

The armed forces have battled the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam since 1983 in a war largely contained in the north and east and away from attractions such as the southern beaches, the central hill country and the ancient kingdoms in the north-central region.

The LTTE bomb attacks in Colombo is said to be partly responsible for the drop in the arrival of tourists who have security considerations uppermost in their minds. For instance, even the Australian cricket team refused to visit Colombo early this year to participate in the World Cup Tournament alleging security reasons. The much publicised devastating attack on the country's Central Bank tower in the commercial heartland of the island's capital must have had an adverse impact on tourism.

ALL EFFORTS TO PREVENT REFUGEE INFLUX

T N Gopalan

Once again the Sri Lankan Tamils are pouring in, well, not exactly. Actually it is only a trickle at the moment. Around 1,000 of them have arrived at Rameswaram in August, and more continued to in batches of twenty or so. And all of them from Pesalai in the Mannar island.

Thus their number being small, the Lankan Tamil refugees in the current phase do not pose any great problem, administrative or otherwise, to the government of Tamil Nadu.

But apprehensions that the trickle could turn into a flood a la 1985 and 1990 are widespread. Columns after columns are written in English and Tamil newspapers and magazines on the implications of the renewed refugee inflow, where it all could lead to, when the influx would stop, whether it is all part of a grand rather insidious design of Velupillai Pirabhakaran, what are the steps the governments of India and of Tamil Nadu could take to forestall the take-over of the land by the Tiger columns ad nauseum.

There is a distinct sense of unease in the air. Though an avowedly Tamil nationalist party like the DMK is in power and Chief Minister M Karunanidhi never tires himself of proclaiming his undying love for his ethnic brethren across the Palk Straits and affirming his determination to play host to these fleeing persecution at home, the ground reality is that the refugees are unwelcome and all out efforts are on to discourage further inflow. None of the political parties would breathe a word on the none too subtle methods employed by the Government to stem the flow, though some of the sordid details are out in cold print. Again though all these parties including Jayalalitha herself stress the need for Tamil Nadu to extend a helping hand to the suffering fellow Tamils of the neighbouring island, no-one is willing to stick his or her neck out and say or do anything that might be interpreted as an unequivocal invitation to the Lankan Tamils to come over here if they really feel unsafe over there.

That is indeed a sea-change since the mid-eighties when the Lankan Tamils started arriving in large numbers and even settled down to a permanent refugee life. There was such a groundswell of sympathy for the refugees, for the Eelam cause that the Lankan Tamils

were treated almost like VIPs wherever they went - and such hospitality was extended not just to the various leaders but even to ordinary folks.

The administration too was extremely sympathetic and this correspondent had been struck by the zeal displayed by the officials then to attend to the needs of the inmates of the refugee camps. That was in sharp contrast to the way the repatriates from the plantations were treated by the very same officials, like dirt beneath their feet. Was it class bias, he had wondered then. Whatever it was, the Lankan Tamils were a privileged lot. Right up to the Indo-Sri Lankan pact of 1987, the various militant groups had a field day and the number of refugee camps started multiplying, with the better-off sections among the Lankan Tamils finding it no problem whatsoever to get apartments or bungalows to live in for rent.

But, after the accord nearly a hundred thousand refugees in the camps were sent back - though there might have been some subtle hints of coercion, over all the process was voluntary.

When the LTTE took on the IPKF the sympathy for the Lankan cause itself started declining. But still demonstrations demanding the withdrawal of the IPKF could be held and when Karunanidhi was voted back to power in 1989, things improved slightly for the refugees inside and outside the camps.

Mr S C Chandrasekaran, the moving spirit behind the Organisation for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OFERR), and son of the late Chelvanayakam recalls AAt that time regular meetings used to be held between the NGOs and the rehabilitation department officials. Then, as now we did not feel like unwelcome guests, whatever be the political conjuncture that had obtained. Kalignar could always distinguish between the Eelam politics and the problems of the refugees.'

But the very same Kalignar regime was maintained a discreet silence when the Customs Department of the Union Government seized the fishing boats which ferried in the refugees in June 1990 in the wake of the Eelam War II. Subsequently the boats went to seed for lack of maintenance and the engines were stolen too. After protracted battles in the Courts, the boats were returned to their owners only a couple of years ago.

Be that as it may, again over one hundred thousand refugees came to India again and despite the IPKF-LTTE conflict and despite the fact that the Indian Government had become distinctly cool towards the Eelamists of any kind and even in Tamil Nadu only a few Tamil nationalist groups talked about Lanka any more, the refugees were treated decently.

Whatever the political configurations at any given moment, the people at large were certainly not hostile to the Lankan Tamils. Not a single refugee was harmed after the Rajiv assassination in June 1991.

Anyway Jayalalitha sought to derive political mileage by branding the refugees as the villain of the piece, blaming them for highway robberies and other incidents of violence, and vowing to repatriate them all. The camps were going derelict. Many were folded up and the inmates relocated. A lot of restrictions were imposed on the movements of the refugees. Over 50,000 were repatriated, many of them against their will.

The special camps, originally set up during the last days of the Karunanidhi Government, apparently to segregate the militant elements, increased in number, this time those who failed to register themselves with the police stations also finding their way to the special camps wherein prison-like conditions obtained and the inmates were humiliated no end.

The return of Karunanidhi in May last saw the restoration of the quota for the refugee students in higher educational institutions and the camps too received some face-lift. With Jaffna having fallen once again, there is some sympathy for the benighted ethnic brethren. All the same the return of the refugees is greeted with mixed feelings.

Everyone across the spectrum seems to be genuinely concerned with possible infiltration by the LTTE. Even the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) which prides itself on its open support to the Tigers, cautioned the DMK to ensure that even while taking care of the refugees, the situation in the state does not deteriorate to a point when our enemies could raise the spectre of breakdown of law and order and get your Government dismissed again.... (Incidentally the PMK, badly mauled in the recent elections, is once again inching its way towards the DMK-front. That the Tamil Maanila Congress does not like the prospect is a different story.)

Karunanidhi also declared that all refugees would be screened for possible militant links and that those suspected to be having any would be kept in the special camps.

He also clarified that none of the fresh refugees would be allowed to live

on their own and that all of them would have to live in the camps meant for them.

There are nearly 30,000 refugees living on their own, most of them dating back to the eighties. While generally they are well-off, there are also those who have fallen on bad days, like the drop-outs from the militant ranks and who take to minor crimes, creating a headache for the Government. Perhaps the chief minister would not like their numbers to swell and hence his stipulation that every new refugee be kept within the confines of a camp.

Only on 31 August the state police took into custody four members of the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party at Tuticorin. Two AK-47 rifles and 120 rounds of live cartridges were recovered from their contacts. They had been brought over here by some Rameswaram fishermen. Such developments put everyone on the edge.

The goings-on of Rameswaram and what generally the fishermen there are up to have always been a matter of much animated discussions and speculations. That many of them do act as conduits to the militant groups, the LTTE especially, transporting kerosene, diesel drugs and many essential commodities, for a fee is well-known. The fishermen on their part claim that they do whatever they do on the point of a gun but that they are harassed all the same by the authorities here.

The refugee influx too has created problems for the fishermen. Unlike in the past when the refugees arrived in their own boats, only for find them seized by the customs authorities, this time round, at least in the first few days, they managed to hitch a hike in the boats of the Rameswaram fishermen.

Apparently from Pesalai they were taken to a point in the sea by the LTTE and then transferred to the Indian fishing boats. Karunanidhi acted smart. On the one hand he declared on the floor of the Assembly that no refugee would be turned back. At the same time his fishing department officials were quietly seizing the fishing boats which brought in the refugees. The fishermen cried foul. 'You can't pretend to be extending a red carpet to the refugees, but harass the fishermen who bring them in', they protested. But none, not even the AIADMK MLAs would not take up their cause evidently for fear of being branded as abettors of the LTTE designs. Finally the fishermen cried off though they are still apprehensive that the LTTE could create problems for them midsea.

The incoming refugees themselves repeatedly tell the Press that the Tigers are instigating the process, directly or indirectly. Though they also talk about problems at the hands of the Lankan army, abductions, disappearances and so on.

At the time of going to the Press, in the first week of September, the refugee inflow had tapered off and there are no signs those from the peninsula too would join the queue.

The Deve Gowda Government has apparently told the Chandrika regime to see that the flow does not go on for too long. Not that there are credible reports that the Lankan Government or its army is provoking the current exodus.

Evidently the LTTE is coaxing the residents of Pesalai to leave because it hoped to once again whip up sympathy for the Tamil cause both in Tamil Nadu and abroad. Many observers feel it is

once again playing a cynical game and the influx could create unnecessary pressure on the Karunanidhi Government which will only prevent the DMK from playing an active role in finding a solution to the ethnic tangle.

Many had still expected Karunanidhi to mount pressure on the Centre and make it tell Chandrika to get back to the negotiating table fast. If he is going to be burdened with the refugee problem and the possible infiltration by the Tigers at this juncture, he just will not be inclined to play a larger role in the issue. ●

KINSHIP AND CORRUPTION IN CONTEMPORARY TAMIL NADU

G.Ramesh, Madras

In the last five decades of political independence, the Indian subcontinent has seen several family rules and ruling families. Recent history is replete with assassinations, dynastic wars, arms import deals, shady swamijis, Swiss bank accounts, hawala transactions etc., Kinship and corruption, it can be said, are seen to be central issues in contemporary subcontinental politics in many ways. (Their relationship is fit enough a topic for a PhD thesis in anthropology/history in a Western University!) The link between the two has the five following major features, possibly shared by the corporatedom here:

1. The ruling families have a tough father or mother at the helm, necessarily leading to a succession war. There are rare exceptions to this trend like Indira Gandhi (who succeeded Jawaharlal Nehru after a short interregnum), Sirimavo Bandaranaike (who succeeded SWRD), Sheikh Hasina Wajed (who took on the mantle of Sheikh Mujibur-Rahman) and Rajiv Gandhi. In any case, they fought bitter battles with their opponents within and outside their respective parties.

(a) If it is a patriarch, the succession war after death or assassination is usually fought among sons, daughters and wife/wives/concubines. Sometimes, all of them lose and another family takes over.

(b) If it is a mother, the battle is between sons and daughters, with the daughters-in-law and sundry cousins throwing themselves around the ring!

There are enough examples for every case. In the case of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the fight is between daughter Benazir Bhutto and son Murtaza who is supported by Nusrat Bhutto, their mother. The case of Anura and Chandrika with mother

supporting the latter is too well known. After Sheikh Abdullah's death in the early eighties, son Farooq Abdullah, supported by his mother, and son-in-law G M Shah fought a bitter battle un mindful of the emerging Kashmir insurgency.

2. The whole idea after assuming office is to establish a kinship authority who'll perform the difficult task of backroom negotiating and/or fund collection which is crucial to any bode of governance in the contemporary subcontinent. Thus, it is doubly wrong to call this authority as Aextra constitutional". That this authority is as Aestablished" as the Aestablished democratic structures" and is necessarily related to the head of the state/government/party structure is obvious. Only that they don't put it in the constitution.

3. This entire family is thoroughly corrupt, in the sense that nepotism is the very grammar of contemporary subcontinental politics and not wayward behaviour to be corrected later. Thus, electoral (mis)fortunes of a leader who is known to be corrupt, or fundamental changes in the economy towards Westernised liberalisation, do not necessarily alter this rule. Witness the Narasimha Rao or Sukh Ram corruption episodes, with their wards getting implicated in urea and telecom scams respectively.

4. The link between the two is universal cutting across the entire spectrum of class, caste and creed.

5. Tamil Nadu can take pride in contributing the fifth feature to this hitherto-unwritten grammar: if there is not a family, acquire one so that it could be disowned later!

Ms J Jayalalitha was without a real
(Continued on next page)

WHY DOES TAMIL NEED TRANSLATION?

G.Ramesh

Whatever is available to us in the form of Tamil texts, it is stated, are out of a legendary sea flood which sank a sprawling continent, the home of the mythical first sangam, or academy of discourse in which even dangerous Gods participated as poets and scholars to enunciate and celebrate the landscape of poetry. Some texts, including works of grammar, it is said, floated out northwards of the sinking city, Tenmadurai. A princess, who was Tamil herself in a manner of speaking, and her brother-prince, a poet, carried them to the safety of Kapatapuram, the next capital of the Tamils which went onto host the second sangam.

In his short story titled Kapatapuram,

(contd. from page 29)

family when she managed to ascend to the AIADMK leadership after going through an open war with MGR's widow propped up after his death by MGR loyalists. She even boasted about not having a real family of her own. After she became the head of government, she promptly acquired a family from Mannargudi near Thanjavur.

Thus, Sasikala Natarajan, the video-shop owner of Alwarpet, was her foster-sister; Sasikala's husband and ex-government public relations man Natarajan was her hatchet-man for shady political deals and starting the private channel JJ TV; she really wept when Sasikala's brother and mother died; Sasikala's nephews were like her sons; she ultimately called one of them, Sudakaran, her foster-son and antagonised the civil society here to conduct his Rs 100 crore marriage last year; she was happy when his wife got her a grand-daughter two months ago.

Last week, due to pressure from party cadres smarting under electoral defeat, Jayalalitha disowned Sasikala and her clan. Out went Sudhakaran, his wife and Jayalalitha's new grand-daughter from Pose Garden. Sasikala had been out of Pose Garden ever since her arrest in June last for foreign exchange violations. Sudhakaran's brother, Bhaskaran, is out on bail fighting the same case. Another brother, Dinakaran, is in jail facing trial for foreign exchange violations worth Rs 65 crore.

Jayalalitha chose London-based Guardian daily to give the first indication that she was about to disown her foster-family. The next day, she called on her foster-sister in jail and told her that

Pudumaipithan, one of the two geniuses of modern Tamil prose in this century (the other being Mouni), recreates this myth as follows: Kapatapuram too would be consumed, by fire and the flooding sea, after a sacrificial rite goes out of control. The priest-hero kills a huge dinosaur-like monster which disrupts the ritual. And the streaming hair, of an eternal maiden about to be sacrificed (who is the personification of Tamil), touches the waves watched by her lover-narrator. The city's golden fortresses melt into the sea set on fire originating from the smiles and the fiery third eye of a God in a balance of dance, Nimalan. And language alone escapes this catastrophe.

This is one of the central myths (and

she was being ditched. Jayalalitha's statement, ditching Sasikala and indirectly blaming her party men for the decision, arrived the very next day. In the same statement, she called herself as the chief of a new family, that is the AIADMK, and wanted party men who left her recently along with rebel leaders to return to her. AI belong to no-one. Everyone of you belongs to me, as I am your mother or sister." she simply told them.

This jaded script has failed to cut ice with many people here who know that the economic and emotional links between the erstwhile Sisters are indeed strong. It is clear that the script is being put on stage and their relationship is being put on hold - just to enable the AIADMK to win back support from the rebels (who are currently led by former health minister S Muthusamy and S Kannappan) in order to fight the local bodies' polls in Tamil Nadu being held next month after decades. The AIADMK has almost no allies in the polls while the DMK-led alliance, consisting of the Tamil Maanila Congress, CPI, Indian National League and smaller parties, is intact.

The DMK too is preparing for a dynastic succession. While party chief M Karunanidhi lords it over Tamil Nadu as Chief Minister, son Mu Ka Stalin cannot be left behind as a humble legislator with a cellular phone. Eyebrows were raised when Stalin failed to find a place in the DMK cabinet. It is stated that he will get the first taste of governance as the Mayor of Madras... oops... Chennai, the new name. The use of the former name, simply, only betrays my political incorrectness!

not historiography) of sangam Tamil. For them, language bursts forth out of an apocalypse but continues to glow, like a lamp. The origin of cosmos of whose order resembles grammar (with the chief work being Tolkappiyam) and whose peak expressions are, in the classical sense, the poetry of intimate love landscapes, or agam, and the poetry of public spaces, or puram.

The sangam classics and later works like Silappadhikaram, Manimekalai and Chintamani, had remained lost, for more than seven centuries or so, to the Tamils who were preoccupied with bhakti poetry and its later variants. The works came to light in the later part of last century, as the late A K Ramanujan puts it, in a dramatic manner during a thorough search of palm manuscripts by a team of scholars led by Ci Vai Damodaram Pillai of Jaffna and U Ve Swaminatha Iyer of Tamil Nadu. This time, Tamil had to survive not flood and fire, but the gnawing of the termites!

Following this, the Tamils saw a veritable renaissance of language and culture. Coming to think of it, this discovery of Tamil texts proved so crucial that, rightly or wrongly, it had played a decisive role in structuring of Tamil political identity in south India and Lanka for an entire century!

Politics apart, it is clear that Tamil texts are primordially works of cultural uniqueness, proving to be of immense value to scholars from across the world. As Tamils, we owe it to Western scholars like the Portuguese Fr Caspar d'Aquilar (Portuguese), Italians Robert de Nobili, Guiseppa Constantine Beschi (popularly known as Virama Munivar), Germans Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Rhenius, Rev G U Pope and Fr Caldwell (from the British Isles), the Frenchman Julian Vinson, the Czech Kamil Zvelebil and the American George L Hart and countless others. They have done our job, by informing the Western world about this unique language and its poetry and grammarology.

It was the European missionaries who gave us the first modern Tamil dictionary and works of comparative grammar. Later, they translated the Kural. Thanks to some of our scholars like the late K Kailasapathy and Karthigesu Sivathamby, the Western academia was made aware of the heroism of another culture.

While some translations like that of Pattuppaattu by J V Chelliah (of Jaffna) are of great value to classical English, the translation of selections of sangam poetry and Nammalvar's hymns into contemporary English verse by the late A K Ramanujan has turned out to be an extremely fruitful exercise! Well, the best

(Continued on next page)

Book Review

CONTEMPORARY SRI LANKA IN PERSPECTIVE

Democracy and Human Rights

By Dr Neelan Tiruchelvam

Published in Tamil by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo.

A new and valuable addition to the little literature available on the subject of Human Rights in Tamil has been made by Dr Neelan Tiruchelvam, who is a Member of Parliament and also a scholar of no mean repute in legal studies. This attractively published book, released in 1996, takes a critical and empirical look at Human Rights and Democracy, especially in relation to the sadly troubled island of Sri Lanka.

The book is written in an eminently readable style and for this our thanks are due to the competent translators of the original contributions made by Dr Thiruchelvam in English. There is minimum use of jargon and I found the assembled essays easy to understand and absorbing reading. Since there is a paucity of good quality studies on this subject in Tamil, it is useful for the Tamil reading public to

read this book which satisfies a dire need.

Human Rights and Democracy and Civil Society have assumed a vital place in the agenda of the politics of today, whether it be national or international. In fact many of the donor countries of the North have in recent times emphasised the need for good governance in developing countries if they wish to gain assistance because whatever development may take place it would not be meaningful to the people unless they are able to enjoy democracy and an assurance of their rights and liberties, and they remain free of any erosion of civil society.

Divisions

The book itself falls into four divisions: 1. Democracy and Human Rights; 2. War and Peace in Sri Lanka; 3. Law and Justice; and the final section discusses some leading personalities and their role

writer, who recently had the occasion to listen to Professor Parthasarathy at a meeting at Madras, was astounded by the sheer power of the English verse, especially the Kanal Vari, wherein lovers Madhavi and Kovalan part ways, and Fate hurls the latter from the mode of passionate Love at Puhar towards the path of imminent Death at Madurai.

Fate has willed in the current era that Tamils live all over the world, especially in North America and Europe. (Some more fortunate people like me live in Tamil country and also get a chance to occasionally travel). Tamil has tremendous strength to absorb any modern mode of language. Yet, most of us are forced to operate in languages other than Tamil, mostly for economic reasons. We can turn this difficult situation for ourselves into an advantage for Tamil, if we translate both ways and make our language contemporary and come alive. As Bharati said, the literature among us must try to translate into Tamil modern literature of as many languages as possible. And others should patronise this activity.

And, we're soon going to have a generation of Tamils, full-scale translated beings, or cultural mongrels who'll have to learn their mother tongue at the age of 20. Even at least for their sake, it is our responsibility to ensure translations of Tamil classics into contemporary verse forms of the world's major languages - to give them respectability and cultural space. ●

in relation to values and good governance, selected from the local and foreign environment.

For example, the essay on S Nadesan demonstrates the invaluable contribution of this singular - sentinel of Human Rights in his days, more or less, as a pioneer in Sri Lanka. The next personality taken for scrutiny is Mr Parthasarathy and his indefatigable contribution towards resolving the national question which unfortunately ended unsuccessfully and thanklessly. When he goes on to write about Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan in his review, and his essay on Myanmar, Dr Thiruchelvam shows the situation regards democracy and liberty in his mastery of material with dexterity and incisive analytical interpretation.

The first section of the book should be read to gain an understanding of the movement for Human Rights in contemporary times. In this study of 97 pages we are able to gain a sound grasp of both democracy and the inalienable relationship of it to human rights. This is saliently made clear in the series of essays presented by the author.

The second section which is devoted to the conflict and its damaging effects on the society of the island is of particular interest to all of us today. He raises very important questions such as that of the price of life today and goes on to answer them in a manner that should shock and shame Sri Lankans. The language question, the tribulations of the minorities, the right to life, are some of the more tragically poignant studies encompassed in this section. The chapters make us engage in soul searching and the sensitive reader will realise how Sri Lanka had fallen from having been "Aparadise" isle because man alone is vile.

Analytical

On the section of law and justice, Dr Tiruchelvam is profoundly analytical. His learning and acumen are evidently, and vividly demonstrated by him in the manner in which he deals with the topics, he had set out to examine. He has dissected bills and laws, acts, reform and attempt at reform, and interestingly there is an evaluation of the Budget - 1966 - in pages 188-196. It is also fascinating to read his presentation on the "ACommission on Bribery and Corruption".

I found that all these articles and essays have really been delivered by Dr Neelan Tiruchelvam as speeches. All of them demonstrate cogent reasoning, solid argument, methodical assembly of material and exhaustive reading. All interested in gaining a clear and proper perspective of contemporary Sri Lanka and of the present day times will largely benefit from reading this collection of studies.

The studies themselves are informative, they educate the reader, and present to him lucidly an intelligible vision and insight into an important series of issues of public interest and common concern.

-Professor Bertram Bastiampillai.

(contd. from page 32)

translations are inevitably in contemporary language. Ensuring such translations is a sure way of updating a given culture. This way, English seems to benefit from Tamil rather than the other way round!

It needs a living poet to effect a good translation. Ramanujan, being one of the outstanding contemporary Indian English poets, has created an extraordinarily rich space for Tamil in the Western world. Sangam poetry is being compared to the works of English poets like Gerard Manley Hopkins and Dylan Thomas and the American Marianne Moore. It is up to Tamils now living in the West to make use of this space. An Indian scholar, Professor Indira Peterson, of Mount Holyoke College in the United States, has followed him by rendering Thevaram hymns into English verse.

Another outstanding Indian English poet has rendered the first-ever English verse translation of Silappadhikaram. R Parthasarathy, who teaches comparative literature at the Skidmore College of New York, has come out with The Tale of An Anklet, after ten years of intense work. The Silappadhikaram has had three translations so far - all in prose - by V R Ramachandra Dikshithar (1936), Alan Danielou (1965) and Ka Naa Subramaniam (1967). And now in English verse, Ilango= Adigal's poetry can take its rightful place besides the immortal works of Homer, Goth and Milton. This

Visit to Jaffna

by E. S. Thevasahayam, Ph.D.

Chairman, Governing Body of Church Missionary Society Schools,
Diocese of Colombo, Retd. Principal, St. John's College

[Taken from: St. Luke's Church, Borella: Parish Newsletter, July 1996. Note: The last paragraph of this message from Dr. Thevasahayam is slightly outdated by the army's change of attitude since the suicide bomb of July 4 and its accompanying UTHR (JB) Special Report 7. However, it is a useful document in that it records the sentiments of the Tamil public towards the army between December 1995 and June 1996 - Jeevan Hoole]

Our Bishop was invited by the government to visit Jaffna to look into the schools and churches. He asked a few of us to join him. I went along as the Chairman of the Governing Body of CMS Schools to look into our three schools. The Ven. Sarvanandam, came along on his visit to Jaffna as Archdeacon to look into the churches. Mrs. Jeyaweerasingham, Principal of Chundikuli Girls' College, came along to hand over to the Acting Principal. [Her husband] Mr. Jeyaweerasingham was invited to join as a Civil Engineer to assess the damage and Rev. Nesakumar who is now a refugee in Kilinochchi joined as he is to go back to take charge of St. John's Jaffna.

We flew down, courtesy of the army on the 17th [of June] and returned on the 19th. When I went over to Jaffna on 1 Jan. 1988 to take over as Principal of St. John's College, Jaffna, there were about 25 army check points from the airport to Jaffna Town. This time too, it was the same check points, except that it was the IPKF then and the Sri Lankan Army this time. When I went to my school then, many of the buildings were damaged by the 1987 war. This time too it was the same, only worse.

What we saw was more than we had imagined. The whole place is devastated and about 80% of the houses are destroyed or damaged. Most of the people have lost all or most of their belongings. But after being in refugee camps for over six months, the people are happy to be back and start their lives all over again. Of the churches, St. James's Nallur, is the worst hit, both the Church and the Vicarage. St. Mary's Kopay has been hit, and the Vicarage and Parish Hall are badly damaged. St. John's Church, Chundikuli, is slightly damaged, but the

roof being so steep, the tiles have all come down for the nearby blast. Urumpirai Church and Christ Church Jaffna, had been destroyed earlier and need to be rebuilt. Of the schools, St. John's is the worst hit, with about 10 buildings damaged, three of them badly. The damage to Chundikuli Girls' College is not that bad. Nuffield School for the Deaf and Blind, Kaithady, was slightly damaged. The total cost to the repairs is estimated by the Civil Engineer to be about Rs. 6 million to 7 million. As the people were forced to evacuate in Oct. 1995, they left their houses with only what they could carry on their long trek to refugee camps. Most of their things have been looted. In spite of all this, the mood of the people is one of joy and relief. Those who evacuated to various parts of the peninsula have been able to return to their homes, as the army is now in control.

But those who evacuated to the mainland, mainly to Kilinochchi are unable to get back. Schools, although damaged, have started to function. St. John's

and Chundikuli have a strength of about 60% of teachers and students and the number is picking up by the day. Food is available, but the distribution system being inadequate, the CWE is unable to cope, and people buy from the CWE and sell at exorbitant prices. We were told that the problem is unloading at Kankesanthurai with just the one berth available. Only when road transport is restored, will there be free flow of food and all other commodities. The most urgent need is [for] cement and tile/asbestos sheets for roofing. When this is freely available, the repair work can be expedited. We were told that there is no demand for petrol as all cars and three-wheelers have been converted to kerosene. But kerosene sells at Rs. 100 per litre, Civil administration and police have been re-established.

The Sri Lankan Army, unlike in the past, has been most considerate to the civilians and one is able to see the good rapport between the army and the civilians. The army has made every effort to befriend the people and are there now not as rulers, but as liberators. People have responded well. Government and international assistance is needed in a big way to rebuild and one is confident that it will be forthcoming. May we too should, as a church, do what we can to help our fellow churches in Jaffna. It would be a very welcome gesture. ●

Lanka's Cricket Win

The Sri Lankan again proved themselves worthy World Cup winners with a magnificent all-round performance on 7 September to beat Australia in the Singer World Series final.

Sri Lanka scored 234 runs for just three wickets and then dismissed for 184 runs the Australian team, their victims in the World Cup final in March this year.

Once again, Aravinda de Silva was Australia's nemesis. He struck an undefeated 75 runs off 64 balls to take both the "man-of-the-match" and "player-of-the-series" awards.

De Silva's blazing innings enabled the Sri Lankan team to set Australia an asking rate of 6.71 runs per over. The task proved beyond them as they slumped to 48 runs for three wickets.

Only Steve Waugh with a determined 55 runs off 53 balls and Stuart Law with 31 runs made any worthwhile contributions to the Australian total.

Leg-spinner Upul Chandana wrapped up the Australian innings with a spell of four for 35 in six overs. Roshan Mahanama took a superb one-handed running catch at long-on to send back last man Glen McGrath for a duck.

But no-one could deprive de Silva of his match award. It was largely due to his spectacular batting that Sri Lanka were able to set Australia such an imposing total. De Silva finished the tournament with an aggregate of 334 runs without being dismissed once in the four matches. He hit three sixes and two fours in his latest effort.

Earlier, Sanath Jayasuriya and Romesh Kaluwitharana set the tone for the Sri Lanka innings by scoring 42 for the first wicket off 28 balls. They made 27 and 58 runs respectively.

De Silva and skipper Arjuna Ranatunga finished the innings off in style with an unfinished partnership of 103 runs off 87 balls.

FORTY YEARS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR LINGUISTIC EQUALITY

By Dr Neelan Tiruchelvam

[From a book of political and legal essays on Democracy and Human Rights by Dr Neelan Tiruchelvam which was released on 9 July]

5 June 1956 was an important moment in the political history of this island. SWRD Bandaranaike had been swept into power on a wave of linguistic nationalism at the elections which had been concluded in March 1956.

The Government had made the extravagant claim that it would introduce Sinhala within 24 hours as the Official Language of the country.

The 5th of June, was the day on which the Sinhala Only Bill was introduced in Parliament and the day on which 200-300 supporters of Federal Party did Satyagraha on Galle Face Green, a non-violent protest which was disrupted by an unruly mob. Last month we passed the fortieth anniversary of these two events which have traumatised the subsequent history of ethnic relations in Sri Lanka.

This week is also the fortieth anniversary of the Senate debate which took place on 4, 5 and 6 of July 1956.

One of the first acts of the new government was to prepare a draft bill before the end of April.

This apparently was drafted along the lines of the SLFP manifesto provided for Sinhala as the sole national language while assuring the minorities that their language rights would be protected.

However the Government Parliamentary Group on 3 May was critical of the provisions relating to minority rights, and the draft was hastily withdrawn. Prime Minister Bandaranaike had received an overwhelming mandate, but could not prevail upon the more extremist elements within his Parliamentary group.

The Prime Minister appointed a Committee (known as the Sinhala Only Committee) which included the Prime Minister as Chairman, M W H de Silva, the Minister of Justice, Philip Gunawardena, the Minister of Agriculture and Food, W Dahanayake, the Minister of Education, I M R A Iriyagolla, Deputy Minister, and K M P Rajaratna, Deputy Minister. The only minority representative was a Burgher, R S V Poulter the appointed Member of Parliament.

Here again while the Committee was working on its report Bandaranaike was again upstaged by Sinhala hard-liners. L H Mettananda presented his own version of the draft bill which gave no concessions to minority rights. This draft was

released to the press and received wide coverage. This draft had only three clauses.

The Committee's draft however had six clauses and three of them provided for local government bodies to use Tamil or English, and provided for the continuance of English and Tamil in the general administration until 1 January 1960. Here again efforts by the Prime Minister to push through a more moderate bill was frustrated by hard-liners.

F R Jayasuriya, a lecturer in economics at the University of Ceylon started a fast unto death in the precincts of Parliament on 24 May against the Bill. His argument was that the draft bill which permitted the use of Sinhala and Tamil by local authorities would pave the way for parity of status for Sinhala and Tamil.

Bandaranaike interceded and persuaded Jayasuriya to give up his fast on the assurance that he would be allowed to address the government parliamentary Group at its meeting on 30 May. This was a fatal mistake. Jayasuriya's speech to the Group was given wide publicity and the Bill that was finally adopted was almost the Mettananda draft excluding even the minor concessions to minority rights.

It was in this context that the federal party had organised a hartal in many parts of the north-east, an brought public life to a halt. The Party had organised a massive meeting at the Colombo Town Hall on 18 May. On 4 June 1956 Mr Chelvanayakam wrote to the Prime Minister as follows:

Members of Parliament belonging to our Party will lead a batch of about 200 Satyagrahis to sit on the steps on the western entrance to the House of Representatives and there they will remain fasting the whole day."

Mr Chelvanayakam also delivered a copy of this letter to the Speaker H S Ismail at about 12 noon on 4 June. The Speaker verbally assured the delegation that he saw no objection to the request and instructed the Police to take necessary measures to allow the Satyagraha to take place on the steps of the House. However, this permission was subsequently revoked.

It appears that the Prime Minister who received the letter in the midst of a cabinet meeting, adjourned the meeting and conferred with the police and other officials. He thereupon advised the Speaker that permission should not be granted on the ground that the Satyagraha

would disturb the proceedings of the House.

He wrote to Mr Chelvanayakam, "Not only will the Satyagraha be disturbing... there is every reason to believe that a breach of the peace would take place."

The letter was delivered to Mr Chelvanayakam in the afternoon of the 4th, but Mr Chelvanayakam remained defiant. He told the Press "If our supporters are kept out of the precincts of the House we will have to plan some counter move".

The next morning the entire precincts of Parliament had been cordoned off and heavily guarded by police personnel. However the entire area from the Galle Face Hotel to the end of the Green was not policed. Mr Chelvanayakam accompanied by Messrs C Vanniasingham, E M V Naganathan, A Amirthalingam and other Parliamentarians and volunteers started their fast in an orderly manner.

C Suntheralingam also joined the Satyagrahis and was seated next to Mr Chelvanayakam. Both G G Ponnabalam and Senator S Nadesan also visited the scene of the Satyagraha to express solidarity with those engaged in the fast.

Soon unruly mobs began to gather around the Satyagrahis. They were initially curious onlookers, but subsequently waves of hostile thugs surrounded the place. They initially threw stones, one of which hit Mr Amirthalingam and he later entered Parliament with his head bandaged. The mob subsequently proceeded to attack the Satyagrahis and any Tamil who was found in the vicinity. Tamils were pulled out of buses and beaten up. Tamil public servants who left the secretariat building suffered a similar fate. Several were thrown into the Beira Lake. Mr Chelvanayakam watched unflinchingly when his son, Manoharan was set upon by thugs who attempted to throw him into the Lake. Dr Naganathan and Mr Vanniasingham were almost stripped of their clothes and beaten up. The police were passive and unresponsive. They were not equipped to cope with the magnitude of the mob. Many police officers did not even have batons. It was widely believed that the Police had been instructed not to intervene. In some cases the police apprehended a victim and took him to precincts of the House to protect him from further attack.

No member of the lawless mob was arrested. When a Sinhala Inspector of Police went to the rescue of a Tamil constable he was set upon by the mob. The violence soon spread to other parts of the city and Tamil boutiques and shops were attacked and defenceless civilians subjected to violence. Amongst those who were attacked were A C Nadarajah, a

Vice President of the SLFP and S Sharvananda later Chief Justice.

Mr Pieter Keuneman accused the Government of having created a panic in the country by a radio broadcast on 5 June which had been repeated every half an hour. In this broadcast the impression had been created that a "huge army of Tamils led by the Member for Kankesanthurai were coming down to capture Parliament, to upset the democratic process and therefore it was necessary to fight against such a move".

He also stated that it was curious that Mr F R Jayasuriya was allowed to fast within the precincts of the House for several days without any impediment.

Mr Keuneman spoke with great conviction that he feared for the future of the country as one group of citizens had been denied 'equal justice' and the 'equal protection of the law'.

Despite the continuing violence against Tamils, the debate continued until 14 June. 1956 voted for the Bill and 29 voted against.

The 29 included 14 Members of the Federal Party, the Members of the Communist Party, the LSSP, the Tamil Congress and Mr C Suntheralingam. Of this group Anil Moonesinghe, Vivienne Goonewardene, Bernard Soysa and Pieter Keuneman are with us today.

The Official Language Act of 1956 clearly aggravated the ethnic conflict. Since then there have been several important milestones in the struggle for linguistic equality.

The first was the Kodeeswaran case which challenged the constitutionality of the Sinhala Only Act. The second were the Regulations framed in 1965 which made Tamil the language of administration and the language of the Courts in the North and East Provinces.

The third was the Second Republican Constitution which in 1978 made Sinhala and Tamil as national languages.

Fourth the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord called for Sinhala, Tamil and English to be Official Languages, while the 13th Amendment in 1987 provided that Tamil will also be an Official Language.

The new Constitution in its draft Chapter on official Languages seeks to provide equality of status to Sinhala and Tamil.

No doubts significant gains have been made in the legal and constitutional status of Tamil, but we encounter serious problems of implementation.

The Official Languages Commission has yet to exercise in any meaningful way the powers that have been entrusted to it.

Forty years later the struggle for language rights continues to ensure that the promise of linguistic equality is made a reality. ●

Letters

Status of Tamil

I happen to be one among many who share the expressed concerns of G. Ramesh about the status of Tamil. While I agree with much of his assessment of the status of the language in the region of its origin and largest population of native speakers, I do not share his pessimism. I also beg to differ from his views on diglossia. Sanskrit, like any fossilized language, is free of diglossia but English is not entirely free of it and the present closeness of the spoken to written language was achieved as a result of the tremendous increase in mass literacy and a conscious campaign towards some kind of uniformity in education. The 'regularization' of English spelling was another conscious effort which was possible only under certain socio-political conditions. Although the kind of diglossia associated with Tamil poses some serious problems, it is not unique to Tamil, is shared by many developed languages, and is not a bad thing in itself. Diglossia plays a role in the mechanics of language growth and becomes harmful only in situations where traditionalists dominate language policy and refuse to accommodate change. Sinhala and Malayalam dealt with some aspects of the problem by regularizing and accepting as valid some features of the spoken language which were at one time dismissed as colloquial or grammatically incorrect. This has yet to happen with modern Tamil.

The struggle to win acceptability for the spoken language in Tamil literature was not easy, but the contributions of people like the late Professor Kanapathipillai, in the face of challenge by the traditionalists, were valuable. The progressive writers movement in Sri Lanka played a major role in combating the bigotry of the traditionalists backed by the conservative Tamil nationalist leadership in the 50's and 60's. The language, certainly in Sri Lanka, made remarkable progress in meeting the challenges of the modern era and I am confident that, considering the achievements of the past decades, the future (the post-modern era?) is not bleak. In the 60's, despite Sinhala being the sole official language, glossaries of technical terms for natural sciences, the humanities and even technology were developed, and are even now put to use at the universities. At Peradeniya, from 1971, the first year engineering students were taught in Tamil and Sinhala and examination papers were available in English as well as Tamil and Sinhala for the first three years of the four-year course. The only thing that stood in the way of teaching in the mother tongue all the way was the reluctance of the students who were concerned about employment prospects at home and abroad. As far as I am aware, the language is robust and fully capable of handling the most advanced subject that anyone can name. The difficulties that we face in exploiting its potential are social and political. It is not suffi-

cient to develop glossaries of technical terms for a society that denies a vast majority of its members access to advanced knowledge. It has been this majority, and not the elite, that preserved the language and its various cultural traditions, and without modernization of the Tamil speaking societies on their own terms, and not the terms of the imperialist masters and the elite bonded to them, the language cannot develop to meet the challenges of the present era and those to come.

I wonder where G.R. got his impressions about the status of creative writing in Tamil. If they are based on the crop of commercial literature in Tamil, he needs to search farther. Tamil poetry is alive and well in Sri Lanka, thanks to the inspiring work of poets like Mahaakavi, Muruhaiyan, and Sanmuham Sivalingam. Bhaariththaasan was a worthy successor to Bhaarithi but the problem of Tamil poetry today in the land of these two great poets is that much of it has become too intellectual and lacking in social awareness. Jeyakaanthan, despite his decline in later years, was a great writer of fiction and Jaanakiraaman was brilliant. There are many more writers of good quality fiction in Tamilnaadu today, although not as great as Puthu-maippithan. There have also been quite a few remarkable novels in recent times, which are not generally accessible to the readers of the commercial rubbish churned out by the publishers of mass circulation magazines. But this is always the case with serious writing in any society dominated by commercial interests. Nevertheless, the accusation that the modern writer tends to ignore the eternal cultural value of the cosmic language forms is rather unfounded and certainly does not match my experience with the many creative artists and writers I take seriously.

Today's Tamil cinema and cable and satellite television are evils which go far beyond inflicting damage upon the language and its native dialects. They are social ills in the forms in which they exist in Tamilnaadu, and a state whose destiny has been dominated by cinema personalities right up to this moment when leaders of respected political parties need the mercy of a matinee idol to win an election has far more to worry about than the plight of the language. One positive thing about Tamilnaadu is that, thanks to leaders like E.V. Raamasami (Periyaar) and some good traditions of the self-respect movement, it is perhaps the least susceptible state in India to communal violence based on religious fanaticism. It can be proud that the BJP and the thugs of the RSS have not succeeded at all in whipping up religious fanaticism.

I somehow fail to share the contempt of G.R. for 'convent drop-outs'. I do not rate formal education very highly and believe that the best chief minister that Tamilnaadu ever had (and is likely to have for a long while) was K. Kaamaraj who did not go beyond primary school. And, it was never the elite or the creative writers or the scholars who determined the fate of the Tamil language and culture but the broad masses. The intellectuals can play a posi-

tive role only when their concerns extend beyond abstract notions about culture, modernism and tradition to meet the needs of the vast majority and examine how language and culture can serve their needs and social advancement.

I value the contribution of the author of the software to type in Tamil using the keyboard with Roman characters, but that system also brought with it much of the irrationalities of English spelling. Also, its value is restricted to people familiar with English, and, to the typist trained to work in Tamil, the keyboard needs to be based on the standard Tamil typewriter. I do not deny the benefits of computerization, but we seem to be doing these things on the terms dictated by our masters in the West. A unified alphabetic script system for the whole of south and much of south-east Asia will be a sound Asian linguistic response to the challenge of modernism. This need not take the form of Romanization of the script, but that remains part of an option.

S. Sivasegaram

47 Camberley Avenue,
London SW20

"Mothers of Sri Lanka"

When I saw the four and half pages of the short story in Tamil Times TT (August 96), my first impression was that TT is short of substance and were just trying to fill the space. (In fact nowadays I am not pleased with TT as it does not publish articles to reflect the aspiration of Tamils) But eventually after reading all the pages in TT, I just started to read that story and I could not believe what a fitting story it is, depicting the prevailing situation in Sri Lanka (SL), and I request anyone who has not yet read that story to do so.

I know Rajeswari Balasubramaniam as a writer in Tamil, but I hardly read any of her stories, probably because I have lost interest in reading stories. But this is the first time I have come across her story in English and I am amazed to note how she has presented some of the real life situations concerning mothers of Sri Lanka in London through Devika and Luxmy and that of Colombo through Geeta and Devika's sister. Let me congratulate Rajes for her effort.

Through her story she also highlights the following questions and facts:

* How many mothers, like Geeta have lost their loved ones, when is it going to stop and who is going to stop it? Is there anyone who would dare to challenge the SL Government?

* An Oak tree in UK has the right to exist in the world but there is no right for ordinary people in SL to live in peace because they belong to the Tamil ethnic group.

* The poor children in SL have been denied their right to be children, the poor Tamil boys are in the battlefield, some poor Sinhalese boys are at the beaches to sell sex to the foreign paedophile who have no hesitation or moral restraint against exploring innocent lives for their perverted sexual de-

sires.

* The Sinhala dominated governments regardless of their party political point of view want to continue war to stay in power and do not allow the Tamils to live with equal rights in SL.

* The governments that have ruled the country are mainly responsible for all this violence, not just the Tamil militants.

* Why are we letting these mindless politicians and religious fanatics destroy our young ones; the politicians' children will never go to the battle front, why do we allow our children to die for them to enjoy the luxury of life? We breathe the same air, drink the same water, walk on the same grass, look at the same blue sky but we behave like savages to please the politicians and religious fanatics!

* To solve these problems, we have to do campaign work with those Human Rights movements to prevent the increasingly dangerous situation for the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

T Selvaratnam

76 Windermere Avenue
Wembley
Middlesex

DOCTOR WHO?

Sir

I write to commend you for the good work you are doing in your journal. It is important at this juncture in Sri Lankan politics to have an alternative and critical voice on the Tamil question. I must particularly thank you for publishing the essays by Narapalasingam. Unfortunately you don't identify him in any way. Many journals put a small descriptive line at the bottom of an article indicating the author's background. Perhaps you could follow this example.

In Narapalasingam's case you refer to him as Dr What is he doctor of? Surely he cannot be a medical or animal doctor. Narapalasingam's analysis is too complex and too well-informed for that. He does not go for the simple medical solution to complicated social and political problems: either give penicillin or cut it out. He understands that political problems cannot be solved with simple-minded formulas and crude categorisations.

I don't think that Narapalasingam is a doctor of laws either. Unlike lawyers, who get paid for arguing only one side of the case, he is able to examine all sides of an issue and come to conclusions that are fair and reasonable.

He cannot be an accountant. He is able to focus not only on the bottom line and immediate profits, but also on long term consequences and the social costs of given forms of conflict. Pray tell us who this sane and unhysterical person is. Of course you should not give his address; a short biography would do.

J L Stanislaus

18 Livingstone Street
Newark, New Jersey

Propaganda Offensive in Jaffna

The government, in an attempt to "win the hearts and minds" of the Tamils living in captured areas, particularly in the northern Jaffna peninsula, are engaged in distributing hundreds of thousands of leaflets urging the people to support the government's peace efforts.

The first in a series of proposed six leaflets urged the people "not to miss this historic opportunity. If this opportunity is missed, Sri Lanka's future will not be beneficial to you, for us and to your and our children. It will turn out to be a dark future, full of suffering and grief."

The leaflet which recounts the immense suffering the people of Jaffna had undergone during the past 13 years states, "We will work tirelessly to restore to you your homes and properties and your way of life. We are working hard to restore to you the freedoms you were denied."

The leaflet adds that the government was forced to resort to military action because the LTTE unilaterally withdrew from the peace talks and resumed the war. It promises that the government's proposals for devolution of power would meet the long standing demands of the Tamil people for autonomy. It calls upon the Tamil people to help the government to put behind the unfortunate happenings of the past and rebuild a united Sri Lanka where all communities can live with self respect in equality maintaining their separate identities.

Tens of thousands of copies of the government's devolution proposals have also been distributed mainly in the Jaffna peninsula.

Prelates on Devolution

The Buddhist Mahanayakes of the Malwate and Asgiriya Chapters have been reported to told the US Envoy in Colombo, Mr. Peter Barleigh when he recently paid a visit to seek their views on the current situation, that they were totally opposed to the government's devolution package because its implementation was tantamount to granting the Tamils the separate state of Eelam which the LTTE was demanding.

Responding to the suggestion of the US Ambassador that the world community including the intelligentsia and academics had welcomed and hailed the government's proposals, the prelates are reported to have said, "Devolution may be suitable to any country of the world, it will not suit our country, Sri Lanka."

The added, "We cannot allow this island to be divided and parcelled out to different groups. It was never done throughout history. As the majority inhabitants of this island, we have a responsibility to see that it remained intact throughout the years ahead."

There was Prof. Anurudha Seneviratne to facilitate the exchange of views by interpretation. However the ambassador mostly conversed in Sinhala.

Mahanayake of Malwate : Venerable Rambukwelle Sri Vipassi Mahanayake Thera.
Mahanayake of Asgiriya : Venerable Palipane Sri Chandrandanda Mahanayake Thera.

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MATRIMONIAL

Jaffna Christian parents seek professional partner for independent, fun-loving daughter, M.A., 37, US citizen working in US. Details M 868 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents working in Middle East seek UK, USA based bride in medical profession for son, 29, MBBS, doing higher studies in UK. Correspondence treated confidentially/returnable. M 869 c/o Tamil Times.

Lankan Tamil civil engineer, M.S., 46, permanent resident USA seeks correspondence from mature females for marriage. Box 2622, Oxnard, CA 93033, USA.

Jaffna Hindu aunt seeks partner for semi qualified CIMA accountancy student niece, 25, resident in Colombo. Send horoscope, details M 871 c/o Tamil Times.

Cousin seeks educated partners for cousin sister, 40 years and cousin brother, 43 years in good professional employment in Sri Lanka. Inter-marriage considered. Religion immaterial. M 872 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffa Hindu parents seek professional partner for their UK qualified engineer son, 29, in good UK employment. Send horoscope, details. M 873 c/o Tamil Times.

30s groom preferably graduate for Tamil daughter, 30, London, with good employment, vivacious but old fashioned morals. Details and photograph. M 874 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parent seek professional doctor, engineer groom for British qualified doctor daughter, age 26. Send horoscope, details. M 875 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional bride for accountant son, 32, working in Colombo. Willing migrate. P.O. Box 7141, Northridge, CA 93327, USA.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professionally qualified groom, 35-40, for well accomplished daughter, 34, M.Sc. Nutrition, employed in hospital in India.

Prepared to migrate. Send horoscope, details. M 877 c/o Tamil Times.

Parents seek educated Jaffna Hindu bride for engineer son in America (30 years). Photo please. Strict confidence guaranteed. M 878 c/o Tamil Times.

US Hindu parents seek professional bride for M.B.A., East West culture son, 27, holding responsible position. Horoscope immaterial. Details, photo please. M 879 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Tamil Catholic mother seeks professionally qualified partner willing to reside in USA, 27-33, for son, Vice President of major American bank. Religion immaterial. Indian Tamil considered. M 880 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Tamil parents seek Hindu doctor bride for well qualified medical doctor son, 34, tall, slim, working in Australia. M 881 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional partner for professional daughter, 32, US citizen. Telephone: 603 643 9434 (US).

Jaffna Hindu sister seeks bride for brother, 35. Please send details to M 882 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek bride for son, 34, M.Sc., Canadian citizen holding management position. Send horoscope details to Ramalingam, 188 Linden Ave., Scarborough, Ontario, Canada M1K 3H8.

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Mala daughter of Mr. & Mrs. K. Jeyasingham of 67 De Vere Gardens, Ilford, Essex IG1 3EF and **Surendran** son of the late Mr. & Mrs. Selvarajah on 24th August 1996 at London Murugan Temple, Church Road, London E12

Shyama daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Pon Balasundaram of 11 Madangahawatte Lane, Colombo 6 and **Shoban** son of Mr. & Mrs. A. Kanagasabapathy of E 1/3 Hampden Lane Flats,

Colombo 6 on 24th August 1996 at Mayurapathy Amman Temple, Mayura Place, Colombo 6.

Senthuran son of Mr. & Mrs. S. Sridas of 100-91 L'Amoreaux Drive, Scarborough, Ontario M1W 2J8, Canada and **Kavitha** daughter of Prof. & Mrs. S. Thillainathan, C-31 Marrs Hill, University Park, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka on 25th August 1996 at the Crystal Banquet Hall, Markham, Ontario, Canada.

Bhageerathan son of the late Mr. M. Ratnasabapathy and Mrs. Ratnasabapathy of 65 Rudra Mawatha, Colombo 6 and **Shyamala** daughter of Mr. S.M. Rajadurai of 32C Jayawardena Avenue, Dehiwela and Mrs. Rajadurai on 1st September 1996 at Saraswathy Hall, Lorensz Road, Colombo 4.

Ravikandan son of the late Dr. V. Nadarajah and late Mrs. Gowri Nadarajah of Uyarapulam, Anaicodai, Sri Lanka and **Ramani** daughter of the late Mr. A. Mahendran and Mrs. P. Mahendran of 27 Pinewood Close, St. Albans, Herts., UK on 7th September 1996 at The Alban Arena, Civic Centre, St. Albans.

Dhamyanthi daughter of Mr. & Mrs. C. Balendra of 17A Fernando Road, Colombo 6 and **Sivamohan** son of Mr. K. Balasubramaniam and late Mrs. Maheswari Dev Balasubramaniam of 39 Vivekananda Road, Colombo 6 on 8th September 1996 at Liberty Ballroom Holiday Inn, Colombo 3.

Thanuja daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Balachandran of 43 Camrose Avenue, Edgware, Middx., UK and **Gobiraj** son of Mr. & Mrs. Navaratnarajah of 62 Hillfield Avenue, Colindale, London NW9 6NX at Harrow Teachers Centre Hall, Wealdstone, Middx.

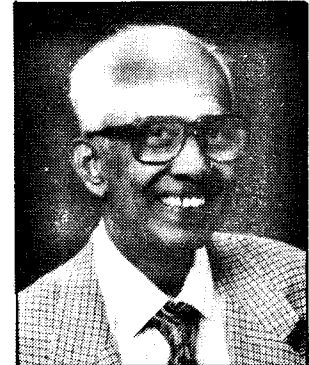
Dr. Parthipan son of Mr. & Mrs. K. Kanthapillai of 49 Haverford Way, Edgware, Middx., UK and **Dr. Priyadarshini** daughter of Dr. & Mrs. S. Puvanendran of 9 Rochester Gardens, East Croydon, Surrey, UK on 15th September 1996 at Fairfield Hall, Croydon, Surrey.

Rengan son of Mr. & Mrs. E. Ponnampalam, 24 Mill Ridge, Edgware, Middx., UK and **Anita** daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Braich on 15th September 1996 at Acton Town Hall, London W3.

Kuhendiran son of the late Mr. Kulandavel and Mrs. P. Kulandavel of 22 E.S. Fernando

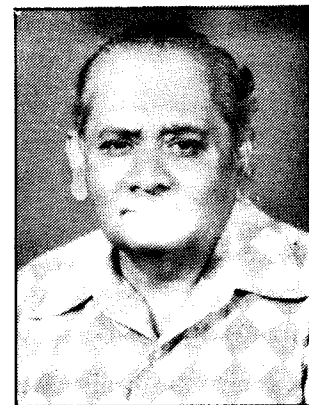
Mawatha, Colombo 6, and **Umyalini** daughter of Mr. & Mrs. V. Nithiananthan of 33 Fathima Road, Mabola, Wattala on 15th September 1996 at Shri Balaselva Vinayagamoorthy Temple, Captain's Garden, Colombo 10.

OBITUARIES



N. Sivasithamparam (Baby) of Thirunelvely North, Jaffna, retired Assistant Director of Social Services and Assistant Commissioner of Marketing; beloved husband of Saraswathy; brother of the late N. Kumaraswamy; brother-in-law of Pushpam Sivagurunathan, the late Kylasam, the late Leela Ilankanathan and Dr. Sivapragasam; loving father of Rani, Shanth Rajini, Ranjan and Gowri; father-in-law of Kanakarathnam, Mohan Thiagarajah, Sabadevan, Gnanakumar and Varalakshimi; loving grandfather of Usha, Mahi, Jana, Arjuna, Abi, Ima, Gajan, Lavan, Sashi, Ramanan, Ahilan, Krishna, Ruban and Vithya passed away on August 12, 1996 in Scarborough, Canada.

The members of the family thank all friends and relatives for their messages of sympathy and support during the period of grief. - 67 Shootfield Crescent, Scarborough, Ontario, Canada M1S 4E1. Tel: 416 299 0576.



Mr. Sinnathamby Rajaratnam of Alaveddy; retired chief Station Master, Anuradhapura; be-

loved husband of Yogalakshmy Rajaratnam, Retired Principal, Ramnathan College Chunnakam; loving father of Siddharthan, Bhakeerathan, Paranthaman, late Nakkeeran, and Aravinthan; affectionate father-in-law of Vishanthri, Sureshini, Brintha and Niraiyani passed away peacefully in his sleep on Sunday, 18th August 1996 in Toronto, Canada. Funeral took place in the presence of a large gathering of friends and relations on 21.8.96.

The members of the family thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and assisted them in several ways during the period of great sorrow. - 65 Thorncliffe Park Drive, Apt 1512, Toronto, Ontario M4H 1L2, Canada. Tel: (416) 467 5221.



Seethaledchumy beloved wife of late Mr. A.E. Sinnadurai, retired P.W.D. Overseer; Proprietor, Faithfield Estate, Yatiyantota; of Vannarponnai, Jaffna; daughter of late Mr. K. Vythialingam and Mrs. Thillaiammah Vythialingam of Navalar Press, Navalarkottam and Ward & Davy, Jaffna; daughter-in-law of Mr. & Mrs. Arunasalam Eliyathamby of Vannarponnai; mother of late Mr. S. Parameshwaran; sister of late Mr. V. Muttucumaraswamy, Retd. Teacher, St. Joseph's College, Colombo, late Annapoorani Sinnadurai of Vannarponnai, late Mr. V. Sivabramaniam, Proctor, Jaffna, late Mr. V. Sivajoti, Engineer, UK, Mr. V. Anandanadarajah, Retd. Principal of UK, late Baby Rajarajeswary, Jaffna, late Dr. V. Thangarajasingam of UK, Mrs. Kamalanayaki Param Thillairajah and Mrs. Pathmawathy Balasingam (both of Australia); sister-in-law of Mrs. Rasamma Thiagarajah (wife of late Mr. V.C. Thiagarajah, Overseer, Yatiyantota), Mrs. Thangaratnam Muttucumaraswamy, retired teacher, Mrs. Dhanaluxmy Sivasubramaniam, Mrs. Logeswary Sivajoti, late Mrs. Kamala-

wathy Anandanadarajah and Mrs. Punithawathy Thangarajasingam (all of UK) passed away peacefully on 4th September 1996 in N.S.W., Australia and was cremated on 6th September.

The members of her family thank all friends and relations who extended their sympathy and support. - 15 Budapest Street, Rooty Hill, N.S.W. 2766, Australia. Tel: (612) 832 3357.



Mrs. Nagaratnam Chelliah (87), beloved wife of the late Mr. Thillaiambalam Chelliah; loving mother of Amirthalingam (Kanderodai) and Dr. Sornalingam (UK); sister of Mrs. Chellammah Namasivayam (presently of Vavuniya); mother-in-law of Mrs. Gnanam Amirthalingam and Sathiabama Sornalingam and appamma to grand and great grandchildren passed away on 8th July 1996 in Navatkuli, Jaffna and was cremated there. - 54 Kendall Avenue South, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 0QQ.



Mrs. Rose Parimalam Thurairatnam, (89), beloved wife of the late Mr. I.P. Thurairatnam, Principal Emeritus, Union College, Tellippalai, Sri Lanka; precious mother of Dr. T. Harichandran (New Zealand), Balan Thurairatnam (Zambia), Sarojini Paramanathan (New Zealand), Dr. T. Manoharan (Saudi Arabia), Sakuntala Kunanayagam (Sri Lanka), T. Mahendran (New Zealand) and Dr. Mithrathevi (UK); loving mother-in-law of Sugirthamalalar,

Vimalavathy, late Dr. T. Paramanathan, Mary, Charlie Kunanayagam, Rajini and Niranjanan passed away peacefully on 25th August 1996 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Burial took place at Kanatte on 26th August.

She leaves behind seventeen grandchildren, fifteen great grandchildren and a host of relatives, loved ones and friends to mourn her death.

The members of her family thank all relatives and friends for their messages of sympathy and support during the period of grief.

A service of thanksgiving will be held at St. Nicholas Church, Church Lane, London SW17 on 5.10.96 at 6pm. - 5 Barrie Pavement, Wickford, Essex SS12 9DR.

IN MEMORIAM



In loving memory of Mrs. Parasakthi (Kanagamuthu) Chellapah on the 25th anniversary of her passing away on 2nd August 1971.

Deeply missed and always remembered by her loving husband Mr. Kasinathar **Chellapah**, retired Examiner of Post Office, Nunavil East, Chavakachcheri, Sri Lanka; mother and mother-in-law of Vivekanathan (G.P. Feilding, New Zealand) and Bavany; Vimala and Mr. S. Mahadevan (formerly of Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, Colombo) Johnsonville, New Zealand; Vigneswary (Chandra) and the late Mr. S. Pathmanathan (Ceylon Bulbs); Swarna (Indira) and Mr. V. Sivapalasingham (Montefiore Hospital, Bronx, New York); Savitri and Mr. S. Vamadevan (Govt. Press); Vijelakshmi and the late Mr. A. Tharmarajah (Education Office, Kilinochchi); grandmother of sixteen grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. - P.O. Box 110, Feilding, New Zealand.

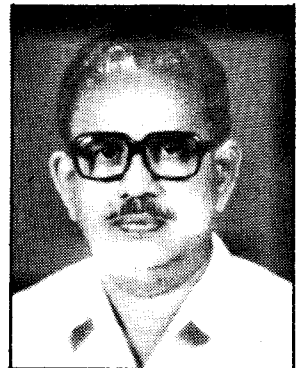
IN MEMORIAM

In Loving Memory of Our Beloved Daddy T.J. Rajaratnam (Retired High Court Judge) Born 23.1.1919



Called to Rest 15.9.81. Fifteen Sorrowful Years Have passed away Your absence is felt everyday No words, no tears could Ever say How much we miss you DAD Today and everyday.

Fondly remembered and sadly missed by your wife Arul, children Rohini, Renuka, Rajiv; sons-in-law Vijayan, Sriharan; grandchildren Vasi, Ravi, Prathi, Jayanthy and Ajit.



In everloving memory of Deva Rajan N.F.S.I., Licensed Surveyor, Leveller & Valuer of 257 Arasady Road, Kanthermadam, Yarlpanam.

Fondly remembered on the fifth anniversary of his passing away on 11.9.91 by his beloved wife Padma; children Sujithan, Siva Kumaran, Rajam, Jeyaraman, Rengan and Raj Iswari; sons-in-law Theventhiran and Nirthanakumaran; daughters-in-law Jeyadevi, Suhanya, Thangalogini and Helen; grandchildren Jamuna, Karthika, Bharathan, Uththami, Luxmanan, Sri Ram, Vaitharani, Vithuran, Devarajan, Poorani, Pavithran and Dhurkka; sister Saraswathy Panchadcharam; brother Punjaksharam; sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, relatives and friends. - Flat 4, 24 Mansfield Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 3AZ.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR BELOVED

**Nanniththamby
Rasa**
Born: 1907-07-18



appah
Rest 1991-12-01

**Southarammal
Rasa**
Born: 1919-05-25



ammah
Rest: 1966-09-03

It is a very long time since we have been missing you both, with ever loving memory. Ammah, it is 30 years since you left us. Your love, affection and the sweet memories we shared linger day and night and is planted for ever and remain engraved in your beloved ones.

Rajeswaran (Geneva), Rajendra (UK), Rajanayagam (USA), Rajasooryar (UK), Sri Ranjini (UK), Pushpa Ranjini (UK), Rajamanokaran (UK), Jaya Ranjini (Singapore); beloved niece: Maheswary Tharmarasa; sons-in-law: Rajayogeswaran, Mahendran; daughters-in-law: Loheswary, Gowry, Mallika, Chandrakumari, Jayanthi, and grand children: Rajini-Vidya, Raj-Anand, Arathi, Jayashan, Luxmi, Ruban, Kalyani, Vathani, Prathaben, Ramanan, Shankar, Kavitha, Abirami, Kiruthiga. (Rasa Rajeswaran: - 67 Winchester Close, Hertfordshire, UK).



Our Family Garland of Flowers. A united family is like a garland; there is no garland without its thread; and there is no garland without its flowers, each different in colour and fragrance. The flowers are strung together by this thread which may not be visible, but is vital to firmly hold the flowers together, and should never be missed or weakened. Appa, you were one of threads which held together our family Garland of varying colours and fragrances. Your physical presence may not be here to hold together the flowers anymore, but the legacy you left behind is and will always be there guiding us through this life, forever remembered with love and pride, especially on this the second

anniversary of your passing away on the 24 September 1994. **Mr. Ponnudurai Narendran Nathan**, most dearly beloved and adoring husband of Gnanambal; dearest loving and proud Appa to your children, Dr. Thrinayani Jegathambal, Dr. Mrs. Sowmya Wijayambal, Mrs. Sobhana Meenambal, Dr. Mrs. Priyadarsani Brahathambal, Adhithya Thiriloachanan, Mrs. Vasutharini Girijambal, Agasthya Ponnambalam and Ambika Dhakshayani; father-in-law of Dr. P. Arulampalam, S. Raveendran, T. Ilangovan and R. Srikanthan; darling dearest Thaththa to your grandchildren, Abhirami Janani Raveendran, Amarnath Thirumadhavan Raveendran, Nirmala Arulampalam, Janaki Saruhasini Srikanthan, and Janarthanan Ragavan Ilangovan. A man of great courage, integrity, humour, wit and wisdom; whose kindness and generosity knew no bounds, you are greatly missed but never forgotten, and are always in the thoughts of all your family and friends. Ever present, ever missed, and ever loved. God Bless. (Address: 53 Crossways, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 8JQ).



In fond memory of **Mr. M.A. Rasiah** (former Head Master, Ilavalai, Ceylon and teacher at Herts Tamil School, Watford, UK) on the fourth anniversary of his passing away on 18th September 1992.

You are very much missed by your family and friends, but you are always on our minds. God bless. - 40 Hillingdon Road, Garston, Watford, Hertfordshire WD2 6JG.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Sept. 29 1.00pm Kokuvil Hindu College Old Students' Association (UK) Lunch & A.G.M. at Coston Primary School, Oldfield Lane, Greenford, Middx. Tel: 0181 578 3179.

October 1 Kaarthikai; Feast of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus.

Oct. 2 Feast of Guardian Angels.

Amuthavane Shines



Amuthavane, a pupil of City of London Girls' School and eldest daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Anpananthan, owner of Vane Agency, Manor Park, London E12, has obtained 10 A grade passes in the G.C.S.E. (O.L.) examination held in June 1996. Six of these passes were in A star grade. She has also obtained an A grade pass in the G.C.S.E. (O.L.) Tamil examination held by the Cambridge University Examinations Board as a pupil of the East Ham Thiruvalluvar Tamil School. Amuthavane is a musician as well and is due to have her Veena Arangetram in 1997. Our congratulations go to Amuthavane and we look forward to more of such brilliant performances.

Oct. 5 Puraddasi Sani 3.

Oct. 7 Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.

Oct. 8 Eekathasi.

Oct. 10 Pirathosam.

Oct. 12 Amavasai; Puraddasi Sani 4.

Oct. 13 Navarathiri Starts.

Oct. 16 Chathurthi.

Oct. 17 Feast of St. Ignatius.

Oct. 18 Iypasi Velli 1; Feast of St. Luke.

Oct. 19 6.30pm Anniversary Service of Christa Seva Ashram, Maruthanamadam, Jaffna at St. Nicolas' Church, Mitcham Road, Tooting, London SW17.

Oct. 20 Saraswathy Poojah.

Oct. 21 Vijaya Thasamy; Manampoo; Vidhiyarambam for new beginners.

Oct. 22 Eekathasi.

Oct. 24 Pirathosam.

Oct. 25 Iypasi Velli 2; Feast of Forty Martyrs of England & Wales.

Oct. 26 Full Moon.

Oct. 28 Kaarthikai.

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

Oct. 5 6.30pm Srisht Creations. Bharata Natyam Ensemble directed by Dhananjayans.

Oct. 27 Kathak by Jayshree Acharya and her pupils.

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CANADIAN NEWS LETTER

Weather: Unusually warm for fall with temperatures rising to 25-28 with clear skies and dropping overnight to 13-15 with occasional showers.

1996 New Pioneers Award: Two Sri Lankan Tamils won the 1996 New Pioneers Awards for extraordinary performances, among eight recipients selected by 'Skills for Change' a non-governmental organisation which administers the award. They are Mary Atputhamar aged 19 and Kumarasamy Nehru who is 63 years old.

Mary started learning English by watching 'Polka dot door' on television and is now an honours student at Richview Collegiate. She now edits the college year book and also works as a volunteer at the Etobicoke General Hospital.

Nehru at 63 is an undergraduate at the York University majoring in Sociology having declined the offer of a scholarship by the Canadian Human Rights Foundation to follow a course in 'Human Rights' at the University of Prince Edward Island. Having been a victim of torture and persecution in his native Sri Lanka, he now spends his time counselling refugees who had gone through similar experiences and newly arrived. Nehru is a founder member and secretary of the Sri Lankan Posts and Telecommunications Association of Canada. He is an active member of the Senior Tamils Centre of Ontario.

The 6th International Conference on Tamil Culture which was inaugurated on 24th August with much fanfare of floats and processions petered out into a subdued side show with only a few hundreds in the audience at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre which could accommodate 2000.

The Chief Guest, Hon. M. Thamilkudimahan, Tamil Nadu Minister for Tamil Development and Tamil Culture failed to turn up and Professor K. Sivathamby filled in for him. A few others billed to speak were not present and it was left to Dr. K. Ramadas, Dr. R. Janarthanan and the film director Barathiraj to keep the spirits up of what amounted to a lacklustre conference. The debate on 'What is needed more to foster Tamil Culture? Political Supremacy or Socio Economic Development' was the stand out event that deserved merit or appreciation.

The World Tamil Movement of Canada celebrated its 10th anniversary with a musical extravaganza at the Allan. A. Lamport Stadium, Toronto on 31st August. The event was heralded by speeches by Drs. K. Ramadas and R. Janarthanan and well over 5000 Tamils living in Toronto met under open skies to listen to 'honey tongued' Thesai Chellappah render soul stirring Eelam songs.

Tamil Nadu Politicos meet Canadian Tamils: Dr. K. Ramadas and Dr. Keeran, both members of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly along with Chellappah met the Executive Committee Officers of the Tamil Eelam Society of Canada and other

prominent members among the Tamil community in Toronto on 2nd September. They said that there is mass support in Tamil Nadu for the Eelam struggle but at the political level fear of reprisal from the centre is inhibiting leaders from undertaking meaningful measures. The best that one could do is to educate parties and politicians of the North and South of the real issues involved. This could be done by sending periodic delegations to India from Canada and other western countries.

Narmatha Delights in Vancouver



The Eelam Tamil Community Association of British Columbia presented a classical Bharata Natya recital by Kumari Narmatha Thanigasalam at Michael Fox Theatre, Vancouver in aid of the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation, on 11th August 1996.

Narmatha is a disciple of Dr. Smt Kanchana Shivalingam of Edmonton, Alberta. Her recital was well attended by Asians and Canadians living in British Columbia. The highlights of her programme were the Varnam 'Varuvai' in Dharamavathy ragam and the Krishna Patham 'Mathuram' in Aberi ragam.

The President of the Association, Dr. G. Selvakone in his address appealed for a generous contribution towards this worthy cause. Narmatha had her Arangetram recently in Edmonton. The accompanying artistes were Dr. Smt Kanchana Shivalingam: Nattuvangam, Smt Ambika Thammotheram: Vocal, Sri R. Vasudevan: Mirdangam, Sri V. Kaladhar: Tabla, Dr. S. Kumar: Flute, Smt Raji Amarnath: Veena, and Sri Vinod Bhardwaj: Sitar.

AUSTRALIAN NEWSLETTER

Abaya Karam (Helping Hand): The annual Abaya Karam concert to raise funds for orphanages in the North and East of Sri Lanka was held on 10.8.96 at Bankstown Town Hall, Sydney. This year's benefit show was a solo Bharata Natya performance by the well-known artiste Chandrabanu from Melbourne.

Chandrabanu has been a performing artiste and dance teacher in Australia for over 20 years. In the seventies when he arrived in Australia, he created a serious awareness and deep appreciation of Indian Classical Dance with his inspiring performances. In 1973 he established the Bharatalaya School of Indian Classical Dance and had numerous students who followed classes there. After graduating with first class honours at the Monash University in 1974, he was awarded the Ph.D. in Social Anthropology in 1980. He has staged several dance-dramas in Australia.

His recital began with Natesha Kavuttuvam and was followed by the Padam - 'Mylvahanam' and the Varnam - 'Innam En Manam'. After the interval Chandrabanu performed several padams. The highlight was a dance he had composed for the Navagraha Kriti dedicated to Saturn by Muthuswamy Dikshitar. He was the first dancer to perform this item, and the audience response was outstanding. The concert ended with a Thillana in Ananda Bhairavi. It was a scintillating performance wherein the artiste displayed his superb mastery of this dance form. Chandrabanu is a disciple of Sri Adayar K. Lakshman. The accompanying artistes Smt Ambika Docherty - Nattuvangam, Sri Shanmugaraghavan - Vocal, Sri Balasri Rasiah - Mridangam and Sri Raghavedra Rao - Violin gave excellent support.

Earlier, Mr. K. Sivananthan, the President of Abaya Karam announced that the net proceeds of the concert was 6000 dollars of which 3000 dollars had already been remitted to the Ramakrishna Mission Orphanage in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka and the rest of the collections would be remitted to the Hindu Board Orphanage, Jaffna after correspondence with the administration had been completed. The Vice-President Mrs. Devi Balasubramaniam proposed the vote of thanks after which the artistes were honoured with gifts and garlands.

Protest Rally: The Sri Lankan Tamils of Sydney organised a rally to protest against the indiscriminate bombing of civilians in the Kilinochchi area and the economic blockade imposed by the Sri Lankan government. A well attended meeting took place at Stratfield Square and the rally called for self determination by the Tamil people.

Dr. N.T. Sampanthan - An Appreciation

Dr. Nagalingam Thirugnana Sampanthan, formerly Medical Superintendent of Moolai Co-operative Hospital and subsequently Consultant Surgeon/Physician died in Colombo on 2nd August 1996. He was residing at his son's residence following the war in Jaffna, since January 1996.

Doctor Sampanthan was born in Malaysia, where his father was resident, on 19th May 1916. He had his early education there and moved to St. Thomas College, Mt. Lavinia for his secondary education. He belonged to the first batch of medical students who passed out of the

Ceylon Medical College in 1943 and was the first graduate to obtain the certificate because of his excellent performance in the final examination. He joined government service and was at the Colombo and Kandy General Hospitals for a short period.

The Moolai Co-operative Hospital had been founded by then and Dr. Sampanthan was lured by service to his people. He decided to stake his future with this new venture full of uncertain prospects and joined Dr. M.O. Chacko, who had resigned from the Manipay Green Memorial Hospital and accepted the post of Medical Superintendent of this full fledged hospital in 1939 and Dr. G. Chelvadoray who joined about the same time. This trio along with the band of their assistants formed a formidable team and the growth of the hospital from then on was phenomenal. It became the shining example of the incredible success story of the co-operative movement. Dr. Chacko had his store knowledge of vast experience and Dr. Chelvadoray had his impressive string of British medical degrees; but the rush of patients was to young Dr. Sampanthan in his late twenties, fresh from the Ceylon Medical College. From the word 'go' it was his charisma, his 'Midas' healing touch, his gentle caring, his total inability to lose his patience or temper under even the most exciting situations that endeared him to the hearts of his patients for whom his word was the last word in medicine. No wonder 'Sammanther' became a household word in and around the villages of Valikamam West. All this praise and fame on a young doctor did not one bit turn his head. On the contrary it awakened his self-assessment to the realisation of the need to specialise and he chose to do surgery. Study leave was gladly approved by the Board of Management of the hospital and he returned to the hospital in the shortest possible time after obtaining his Fellowship in Surgery from the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. He could have found employment in Britain or in any other foreign country or even picked from one of the tempting offers in Ceylon where such a qualification was rare. Instead he faithfully returned to Moolai to the heart of his community. From then on his duties became manifold - Physician, Surgeon, Obstetrician, Gynaecologist. Patients from all over Jaffna District from all walks of life thronged his consultation room. He would work round the clock starting at 0700 hours with ward rounds, O.P.D., hurried lunch, O.P.D., ward rounds again and walk back to his residence where his relatives/friends/patients would be awaiting his arrival for consultation or for a follow up of an earlier consultation. He would willingly tolerate their long discussion and have a very late dinner. He would never take leave or go on holiday with his family. The best part of his life he gave to his patients.

Rev. S.K. Bunker and nearly everyone of the Jaffna College community were his patients. Once the U.S. Ambassador in Colombo was on holiday with Rev. Bunker in Vaddukodai. He suddenly developed abdominal pain and had to be operated by

Dr. Sampanthan for appendicitis and was an in-patient for three or four days. Several months later Dr. Sampanthan received an invitation from the U.S. State Department to be their guest of honour and visit the States. It was a singular honour which he accepted and enjoyed their overwhelming hospitality. He could have got employment in the States but his roots were firmly in Moolai. He was a Karma Yogi who carried out his duties to the best of his ability without any expectation of rewards.

As the grey, elderly, astute, experienced members of the Board of Management faded away and as the vigorous social revolution of the late fifties in Sri Lanka extended its tentacles on the frail craft of Moolai Hospital, a band of young, inexperienced men took control of the managing board. Dr. Sampanthan, as Medical Superintendent had to face the brunt of the resulting mismanagement and moral turpitude. Many feared that he would get fed up and resign, but he held on, not because he was insensitive to the pin-pricks of the new management, but because the intensity of his commitment to the cause he had dedicated himself to, exceeded all bounds.

In 1960, Dr. N.M. Perera on one of his visits to Jaffna spent a few hours trying to persuade him to contest the parliamentary elections as an independent candidate if not on the L.S.S.P. ticket. Dr. Sampanthan listened to all his pleadings, but politely declined, saying that his best service to the community was at the hospital.

By a strange quirk of fate, he became a victim of an eye ailment. Gradually his eyesight was failing despite treatment from the best of ophthalmologists. He lived in retirement in his house he had built in Kondavil, incapacitated, but cheerful and reconciled. He and his wife went through all the traumas of the Sri Lankan army advances, the IPKF onslaught, the forced removal to refugee camps and the terrible damage caused to his house from the shellings. He stuck on with his wife - both in poor health, until the forced exodus in December 1995. Never through these travails and tribulations did he show any signs of dejection or self pity. This aspect of his character is unique and exceptional.

At last he and his wife reached their son's house in Colombo by January 1996. In his last letter to me dated 01 July '96, he said: 'I have developed a kidney illness which might go in any direction.' His prognosis was perfect for within a month the illness claimed him.

Dr. Sampanthan's name was synonymous with Moolai Co-operative Hospital for nearly four decades. His service which spanned half his life's years was marked with singular dedication, transparent sincerity, untiring devotion, absolute professionalism and excellent bedside manners.

Sri Lanka has lost one of her finest sons and Jaffna one of her priceless gems. Gratitude is perhaps the most rare commodity of our times. However, if and when peace returns to North Sri Lanka, the least the Tamil public could do for him is to build a Sampanthan Memorial Ward for the

Moolai Hospital. To his beloved wife whose contribution to his greatness is immeasurable, to his sons and grandchildren the loss is as profound as it is irreplaceable. Their only consolation could be that they had their finest hour with him.

K. Jeganathan,
(Formerly Principal of Colombo Hindu College), South Africa.

Jeyasankar & Sharavan Mrudangam Duo



A formal Arangetram though it was, but proved to be a public performance of a professional Kacheri; it was the Mrudanga Arangetram of brothers Jeyasankar and Sharavanan, sons of Dr. and Mrs. Jeyanathan held at the Lewisham Theatre on 31st August. The boys aged 15 and 12 were perfected in the art of playing the mridangam by Sri Kurpakaran, a veteran in the art who has trained many more worthies.

The highlight of the event was the lead singer who piloted the programme. He is one of the foremost musicians of South India, a musicologist, Rajkumar Bharati. He is the son of Lalitha Bharati, a grand daughter of the renaissance poet and nationalist Subrahmanya Bharati. From the moment the programme was introduced the entire hall reverberated with the galloping Valachi varnam in Navaragamalla, with the young Sharavanan stroking the mridangam with gay abandon. Subsequent recitals and the way the two brothers aligned themselves with the singer in the variety of kirthanams and complicated rhythmic variations was a sight to be watched. The important element in the practice is the bodily gestures that accompanied the playing and while following the singer's raga delineations as well. Already both the boys have shown talent, understanding the medium as well as karnatic music. The continuous applause from the singer enthused the youngsters. They had the privilege of playing thani Avartham jugalbandhi in complicated thala variations with Ghatam expert Balaskandan and the morsing master Chidambaranathan. The vocalisation of Konnakol by the youngsters was a delight.

A real note of appreciative comment was given by Prof. John Marr, who is an expert in the theory of our Karnatic music. Parents of these two young artistes must feel proud. At the start of the event there was the usual puja and benediction where the Guru who should take the lead was missing. It was a visible omission overlooked by the organisers.

S. Sivapatha Sundaram.

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