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NEWS REVIEW

Govt's Dilemma on Devolution in the Face of UNP's Obstruction

The main opposition United National Party (UNP) is not prepared to play ball with the government and help it get through Parliament the proposed constitutional reform which includes devolution of power to the regions of the island and changes to the country's electoral system. That is the message that came out the much publicised meeting of some 95 UNP parliamentarians which took place on 4 August.

The UNP parliamentarians also decided to oppose the idea of a non-binding referendum on the draft constitution, saying the government should abide by the present constitutional requirement for a two-third parliamentary majority to approve the changes.

The outcome of the meeting had been closely watched for signs of the party's tactics and thinking on government plans to change the constitution, a major thrust of which is devolution of power to the Tamils aimed at ending the protracted war. But many, including the Tamil political parties in Colombo which had been lobbying the UNP leadership hard during the last several months to obtain the UNP's support for the government's constitutional reform, were disappointed at the "wait-and-see" outcome of the UNP meeting.

The UNP decision to wait-and-see is seen as a deliberate obstructionist political ploy to frustrate the government hopes of implementing the reforms quickly. The ruling People's Alliance government, which has a single seat majority in the 225 seat parliament, requires the support of the UNP to get a two-thirds majority vote in parliament to pass the new constitution.

The UNP has 94 seats in parliament but its leadership has been working hard to influence other smaller parties, including those which while sitting in the opposition normally vote with the government.

The government has said it will present its constitutional reform package in parliament ahead of the November budget session. It is proposing to convert

the current proportional representation election system into a hybrid of proportional representation and first-past-the-post, where each voter casts only one vote and the candidate receiving the most votes is the winner.

Political analysts say the proposed new system would ensure fair representation, especially for minorities, and is necessary for the success of government's devolution package that aims to turn Sri Lanka into a federal state in all but name, granting a substantial degree of autonomy to the predominantly Tamil speaking Northeast.

The basic problem facing the government in pushing through its proposal is the inherent rigidity of the present Constitution, introduced by the J. R. Jayawardene regime in 1978, specially in regard to amendments or revision certain of its articles which are deemed "entrenched". Several entrenched provisions of the Constitution make a two-thirds majority in Parliament and the people's approval at a referendum necessary in order to effect changes to the Constitution.

Hampered by the lack of its own two-thirds majority support in Parliament, the government has been considering other options to replace the present Constitution with a new one containing its own reform proposals.

The option to obtain the UNP's support in Parliament appears to have become a non-option with the recent pronouncements of the UNP which make it clear that it is engaged a political game of thwarting the government's efforts.

The government was also toying with the idea of dissolving Parliament, and go for fresh general elections with a view to obtaining a two-thirds majority of its own. This would have been a plausible option had it been pursued within an year of the PA gaining power and before the popular euphoria of Chandrika's ascendancy to Presidency had begun to gradually wane. This again would appear to have turned into a non-option under the existing sys-

term of proportional representation, and given the growing dissatisfaction with the PA government after being in power for nearly three years. Going for a general election in the present context in anticipation of gaining a two-third majority of its own is a political gamble that no sensible political leadership can indulge in.

Therefore the government seems to be seriously considering a third option which is to go for a non-binding referendum to obtain the people's support for the draft Constitution including the abolition of the executive Presidency and the devolution proposals. At the referendum itself, the government hopes that the people's approval could also be obtained to turn the present Parliament into a Constituent Assembly. In which event a simple majority of the members of the Constituent Assembly would suffice to abolish the

existing Constitution and promulgate the new one replicating the "Constitutional Revolutions" of 1972 and 1978.

However, the third option is not fraught without danger of being derailed. Already the UNP leader Ranil Wickremasinghe, who seems to be bent on milking every ounce from the dilemma facing the government, has sounded the warning bell. In a speech on 1 August at Five-Star Hotel in Colombo, Wickremasinghe said the UNP would not support the setting up of a Constituent Assembly to adopt the new Constitution. Political observers see Wickremasinghe's opposition to the government's strategy as a sign of the UNP's fear that the referendum might bring a favourable result for the government.

It is also likely to be an issue for a major legal battle before the Supreme Court on the constitutionality of the move.

The referendum being contemplated by the PA strategists, would be a legally non-binding one: for a referendum to be legally binding, the proposal for the referendum itself will have to be passed by Parliament with a two-thirds majority. Therefore, a non-binding referendum - if the government wins it - would primarily be a political move to put pressure on the Opposition with the argument that the people had given their verdict and that the legislature was morally bound to accept it.

Meanwhile, lawyers opposed to the government's devolution package are reported to be engaged in researching and studying the law to challenge any move, if and when it comes, before the Supreme Court to transform the present Parliament into a Constituent Assembly.

Battle of Omanthai Leaves Over 200 Dead

Government troops were involved in ferocious battles as Tamil Tigers on 1 August attacked in waves to smash military defenses. A force of 1,000 Tamil Tigers, most of them women, staged assaults at seven places near the army-held northern town of Omanthai and smashed two police posts.

The defense ministry said the Tigers fired automatic assault rifles, rocket propelled grenades and artillery guns at army positions and security forces hit back using helicopter gunships and heavy artillery.

The attack was similar of two previous assaults on June 11 and 25 against the same military column which has been trying to open a key highway through Tiger-held territory to the northern peninsula of Jaffna. The earlier offensive of the Tigers was code-named by them as "do-or-die" and officials said all three attempts were aimed at stalling the military advance through jungle terrain.

A statement issued by the LTTE on 1 August said, "An LTTE counter-strike left Sri Lankan forces reeling as they attempted a tentative march forward from their stalled Jaya Sikuru positions short of Puliyanakulam. Sri Lankan forces backed by heavy artillery and moving in battle-tanks and armoured vehicles had attempted a sudden push towards their goal of Puliyanakulam but LTTE forces hit back decisively, halting the invading forces in their tracks. The foiled army advance was followed by intense artillery shelling of the Tamil towns of

Puliyanakulam, Kanakarayanakulam, Karipattamurippu and Oddussudan, which lasted till late evening."

The latest attack which began just before midnight on 1 August and continued to the following morning was not unexpected as the military appears to have had advance information. Earlier on the same day the military shot dead three Tigers who infiltrated the area. "We were prepared for them because we killed three infiltrators who had come on a spying mission west of Omanthai," a defense ministry spokesman said. "We have so far recovered 107 Tiger bodies." At least 40 of the bodies were those of women fighters of the LTTE.

The LTTE in a statement dated 3 August said, "LTTE forces on Friday (1 August) entered Sri Lanka's heavily defended military fortifications at Omanthai, killing well over a hundred Sinhalese troops. Many more soldiers were critically injured. The attack started at 10.30 PM and the ensuing fire fight lasted till 6 AM Saturday. Many highly sophisticated weapons and large stocks of ammunition were captured. 126 LTTE fighters lost their lives."

News reports datelined 4 August quoting a ICRC official stated that the bodies of Tigers killed in the Omanthai battle with the government forces were so badly disfigured the Red Cross could not hand most of them over to the LTTE. The Red Cross dilemma - confirmed by photographs released to reporters by the showed rows of mutilated bodies, their

clothing torn and belongings scattered - was an indication of the ferocity of the fighting and the scores that fell victims.

The Defense Ministry said 200 Tamil Tiger rebels and 67 government troops were killed when the government repulsed the LTTE attack. "It is a good victory and a morale boost," Defense Ministry spokesman Kumara Dewage said of the fighting in Omanthai. "The clash gives us an upper hand." Dewage also said the Tigers had left behind large amounts of weapons and other military equipment when they fled. Dewage said about 100 other bodies were taken away by the retreating Tigers.

Harasha Gunewardene, a Red Cross official, said the agency was able to turn over only 39 bodies to Tamil officials. At least 70 others were so badly decomposed or mutilated the agency would not accept them, he said.

The LTTE in a statement dated 4 August said that, "Intelligence reports obtained from Sri Lanka's military high command confirm that 135 Sinhalese troops were killed - and over 400 injured - when LTTE forces breached the military's fortifications at Omanthai and Irapaikulam on Friday night.

According to these reports, casualties sustained by Sri Lanka's armed forces break down as follows: Police force - 66; Army - 49; Navy - 14; and Airforce - 6"

"This time they have got a big bashing," military spokesman Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe said earlier. "It was a good blow to the LTTE. They did not expect this type of retaliation. The military was prepared," Munasinghe said.

Following the Omanthai battle, Munasinghe said on 7 August that two divisions of troops deployed to open a strategic highway in Sri Lanka's north had linked up south of Puliyanakulam which is some 22 km (14 miles) north of the govern-

ment-held town of Vavuniya, on the 88 km (55 mile) highway from Vavuniya to Kilinochchi.

Military officials claimed one division of the army, backed by helicopter gunships, tanks and artillery had moved from Omanthai near Vavuniya and had met the other division which had moved out from northeastern Nedunkei. "For the movement, we have achieved what we had planned to do. This does not mean that the operation is over. We will now consolidate and then move forward," Munasinghe said.

The link-up of the troops is seen as significant because once the area is captured it will open avenues for soldiers to advance in several directions against the LTTE, according to military analysts.

Diplomats said the Sri Lankan military was this time able to fill in breaches in defence lines caused by the assaults much more quickly than during the earlier attacks in June. "They (the military) seemed to have got in reinforcements quickly to these areas. They were ready,"

the diplomat said.

But a former general, who led the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka a decade ago, said the latest offensive to open the highway seemed to have reached a stalemate. "In one word I will describe it as a stalemate," retired general A.S. Kalkat said in an interview published in *The Sunday Times*.

Kalkat said the Sri Lankan army might be able to open the road, but added that it may not be in a position to carry out further offensive operations against the LTTE as most of the troops will be required to secure the road against rebel attacks.

"It is necessary to have this road as a safe continuous line of communication and maintenance...in which case it will have to be controlled at all times and protected," Kalkat said.

He said the Sri Lankan military had deployed most of its troops in Jaffna to hold the peninsula, which was captured in last year, leaving eastern areas open to the possibility of rebel attacks.

a calculated act to get rid of political leaders in the eastern province who are attempting to help the government democratically in solving the ethnic problem peacefully and ending the conflict," Dharmasiri Senanayake, General Secretary of Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) said in a statement.

"It (Maharoor's killing) is a fascist act aimed at dividing the Tamil and Muslim communities," Douglas Devananda, leader of the Eelam People's Democratic Party, said.

Amnesty Criticises

Amnesty International in a statement on 23 July criticised the LTTE for their silence over the recent assassination of two Members of Parliament.

"The leadership of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) should issue a clear statement condemning the recent killings of two members of parliament from the Trincomalee area," an Amnesty statement said.

"The appeal follows reports of the killing of Mohamed Maharoor, Member of Parliament for the (main opposition) United National Party, and five others on July 20 attributed to the LTTE," the London-based human rights organisation said.

"It also follows mounting evidence suggesting that the LTTE were responsible for the killing of Arunasalam Thangathurai, MP for the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), and five other people at Trincomalee on July 5, 1997," the statement said.

"The killing of members of parliament simply on the basis of their political activities is a contemptible act. The LTTE should immediately stop the killing of non-combatants and cease other human rights abuses, including the taking of hostages," the statement added.

Muslim MP and 5 Others Killed

Gunmen killed an opposition Member of Parliament and five other people, including a four-year-old boy, near Sri Lanka's eastern town of Trincomalee on Sunday, 20 July.

The jeep in which Mohammed Maharoor, a MP belonging to the opposition United National Party, was travelling was ambushed between Trincomalee and the nearby beach resort of Nilaveli at about 10.30 a.m. (local time). The other victims were Maharoor's driver, his bodyguard, a colleague, a principal of a local Moslem school and the driver's four-year-old son.

Police promptly blamed the Tamil Tigers for the killings, but the LTTE has not officially neither accepted or denied responsibility for the killings. Police said three groups of gunmen opened fire at Maharoor's jeep and pumped 20 bullets into him. Seventy-eight bullet marks were found on his vehicle.

The killing came a day after Tiger gunmen seized 22 boats from Muslim fishermen in the area and demanded a ransom of tens of thousands of rupees for the release of each craft, police said. They said the Tigers were still holding 32 Moslem fishermen they abducted more than a month earlier and were demanding the release of five LTTE cadres from military custody before freeing the Muslim hostages. Maharoor had apparently visited the Muslim village from which the hostages were taken before his vehicle was ambushed.

Maharoor, 58, was a deputy min-

ister in the UNP government which lost power to the ruling People's Alliance in 1994.

Maharoor was the second Member of Parliament to be killed in one month in Trincomalee. Arunasalam Thangathurai, Trincomalee Member of Parliament belonging to the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), was killed along with several others in a gun and grenade attack on July 5.

Political parties condemned the killing of the MP saying that it was aimed at disrupting the political process to end the country's ethnic war. "This appears to be

Australia Backs Search for Peace

Australia has lent its support to Sri Lanka's efforts to find a peaceful solution to its ethnic conflict and said it was against the use of guns to grab power.

"The best way we can encourage peace is by expressing our abhorrence to violence. We as a country support democracy and we don't support people trying to grab power out of a barrel of a gun," Foreign Minister Alexander Downer told a news conference in Colombo on 24 July.

He said Australia, which has a large Sri Lankan expatriate community, had a strong interest in an early negotiated, peaceful and durable solution to the ethnic conflict.

"The Australian government has con-

demned unequivocally acts of brutal violence by the LTTE which kill and maim innocent civilians. We do regard terrorist action as completely unacceptable," Downer said. He said the Sri Lankan government had expressed concerns that some financial support for terrorism might be coming from Australia and added he wanted to send a strong message to Australians of different ethnic backgrounds that it was unacceptable.

"An enormous effort is being made in this country to achieve a peaceful resolution to the ethnic crisis that has gone on for so long," he said. "There never will be a terrorist solution to any problems in the world."

The Mystery of the Missing Arms Ship

Mystery surrounds a ship from Zimbabwe bound for Sri Lanka and carrying over 32,000 mortars of 81mm calibre for the Sri Lankan security forces which has gone missing. Reports from Colombo said the ship, which was due in Sri Lanka early July was last heard of when it left Madagascar after setting sail from Africa.

The ship should have been due in Sri Lankan waters on July 2. Doubts were raised as to whether the ship had been hijacked by the LTTE following the receipt by the US Embassy in Colombo on 14 July of a fax purportedly from the LTTE claiming that it had hijacked the ship and its contents had been removed.

Latest reports say that the ship, *Stillus Limmosul Victoria*, has been tracked down to a port in France, but without its valuable contents. The ship's captain of the ship, a Frenchman, is alleged to have revealed that the LTTE hijacked the ship on 10 July off the northern coast of Sri Lanka, unloaded the 12 containers and released the vessel and the crew on 11 July.

The order for the 32,398 mortars were first placed by the Sri Lankan military with Zimbabwe Defence Industries (ZDI) at the beginning of this year. With assistance from an Israeli Company, ZDI hired the services of the ship, *Stillus Limmosul Victoria*, reportedly operating under a Liberian flag, to transport the cargo to Colombo. The cargo was transported by rail from Zimbabwe to Beira Port in Mozambique where it was to be loaded into the ship by 24 May. Thereafter the ship set sail from Beira Port and was in Madagascar around 30 June before heading for Colombo to arrive there by 7 July. But the ship never arrived.

Alarm bells began to ring only after United States Embassy in Colombo received the following fax on 14 July:

"NOTICE AND WARNING

We, the Tamil Tigers, inform you by the present that on 11 July 1997 we have hijacked a vessel carrying arms sailing under Liberian flag. The name of the vessel is 'Stillus Victoria'. On the deck of the vessel there were 12 containers containing 32,400 mortar bombs 81mm, destined for Colombo Sri Lanka, Ministry of Defence.

"We know that the manufacturer and the supplier of the mortar bombs is Zimbabwe Defence Industry from Harare, Zimbabwe. We also know that the deal

was executed by Col. Dube.D.G. of Zimbabwe Defence Industry.

"The cargo was confiscated by us and the vessel's crew was released unharmed. We make known and warn that we will take action against all persons participating in the supply of military equipment used against the legitimate rights of the Tamil people and we will severely punish those concerned.

LTTE WARNING, WARNING, WARNING"

However, on 17 July the contents of the fax were confirmed by the Israeli shipping company to ZDI in an official communication which said that the ship's captain, a Frenchman, had given it details of the LTTE hijack on 10 July, seizure of the 12 containers and the release of the crew on the following day. And the significant point here is that the captain's details were given to the Israeli company before the fax was received by the US Embassy in

Colombo on 14 July, but the Israeli company did not alert ZDI until 17 July long after the receipt of the fax and the story of the missing ship had become much publicised.

What really happened to the missing arms consignment still remains a mystery despite the claims by the captain of the ship.

It must be noted that fax purported to be from the Tigers was not on their usual LTTE headed note paper. But the contents of it relating to the order placed, the type and quantity of the cargo and the parties mentioned were accurate. However many doubt that the LTTE would have been the author of the fax. Why should it volunteer such sensitive information to the public? Usually the LTTE does not publicise details of its arms procurement efforts.

The initial doubt that the ZDI might not have fulfilled its part of its contract to supply the mortars had been removed by the verification of documents in Zimbabwe. However, there is also the possibility that the shippers themselves in collusion with the captain had sold and delivered the consignment to a yet unidentified party after leaving Madagascar, and spread the story of the LTTE-hijack which never took place.

"LTTE Blocking Transport of Refugees and Food" - UNHCR

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) said on 6 August that its efforts to transport refugees and food to Sri Lanka's north were being resisted by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The UN agency said in a statement that it was deeply concerned about the future of thousands of refugees stranded in Sri Lanka's western Mannar island who wanted to return to their homes in the northern Jaffna peninsula.

The UNHCR said it had been asked by the government to provide escort for vessels carrying refugees to Jaffna. The government has also asked the International Committee of the Red Cross to escort food ships from the eastern port of Trincomalee to the northern peninsula.

"The UNHCR therefore began discussions with the LTTE on this suggestion but the response was regrettably negative," the statement added.

"The UNHCR is continuing the discussions, stressing their humanitarian concern about this very difficult situation."

Supplies and people are taken by sea or air to Jaffna as the Tigers control the road linking the northern peninsula to the

mainland of the island. The displaced people were earlier taken to Jaffna by ships hired by the government from private ship-owners. But all sea movement stopped after Tamil Tigers attacked and torched the refugee ship *MV Missen* off the Mannar coast last month and later hijacked a Korean vessel transporting food to the peninsula on northeastern coast. The LTTE also last month announced that they would attack all ships off the northern Jaffna peninsula, claiming Sri Lanka was sending military supplies under the pretext of supplying food and other necessities to the people.

LTTE Hits Out at UNHCR

The LTTE has hit out at the UNHCR for making false and malicious accusations against the LTTE. In a statement dated 9 August, the LTTE says, "We regret to note that the UNHCR has issued a statement accusing the LTTE of hindering its efforts to transport displaced civilians to Jaffna peninsula, thereby blocking humanitarian assistance to the affected population. This accusation is false

and malicious and based on a misconception of our concern about the safety and security of Tamil civilians under Sri Lankan military occupation in Jaffna.

"On the instigation of the Sri Lankan government, the residential representative of the UNHCR met us and requested our co-operation to transport displaced Tamil civilians to Jaffna peninsula. While appreciating this offer of assistance, we sought guarantees from the UNHCR for the safety and security of the people to be transported to Jaffna," the LTTE said.

The statement adds that LTTE drew the UNHCR's attention to the appalling human rights situation in Jaffna, particularly the large-scale disappearances of persons, the nature of harassment to which the returnees are subjected to ie. detention in special camps, interrogation and torture, and to the several cases of refugees transported from India to Jaffna by the UNHCR who have lost their lives as a consequence of Sri Lankan military offensive operations.

The statement said, "The representative of the UNHCR showed no sympathy to our concerns and refused to offer any guarantee to the safety of the returnees. Therefore, we have no alternative other than to turn down their offer of transport.

The LTTE statement added, "we are disappointed to note that the UNHCR delegation in Sri Lanka has been observing studied silence over the continuing military atrocities and economic embargoes in Tamil areas but at the same time finds it appropriate to criticise the LTTE for requesting legitimate guarantees for the safety and security of the displaced Tamil civilians.

"We deeply regret that on such a delicate issue concerning the well-being of the Tamil civilians that the UNHCR has found it necessary to raise the matter on the international forum prior to exhaustive discussion and consultation with LTTE representatives and without a proper balanced exposition of the contradiction."

Informed circles in Washington doubt whether the State Department will act on the recommendation of the Senate and designate the LTTE as a "terrorist organisation. State Department officials have argued that this is easier said than done because one provision of the relevant law provides that "all groups designated as foreign terrorist organisations" have "an automatic right to challenge their designation in the U.S. Court of Appeal."

The resolution introduced by Robert Torricelli, a New Jersey Democrat, and supported by Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican who heads the Foreign Relations Appropriations Committee, was annexed as a "sense of the Senate" to the Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programmes Appropriations Act of 1998. The resolution in the form of recommendation was passed as an amendment during the Senate debate on the Appropriation Act of 1998 for the conduct of foreign operations and related programs.

In the cause of the debate, Senator Torricelli said, "I believe that the LTTE meets the criteria approved during the 104th Congress to designate terrorist organisations, and I urge the State Department to carefully examine the evidence." He noted that, "section 302 of the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 defines a terrorist organisation as one which is foreign, engages in terrorist activity and threatens the security of the United States." "There is no doubt that the LTTE is a foreign organisation. Its main centres of activity are located in the United Kingdom and France, as well as Canada, Australia and India."

Quoting the State Department's Country Reports for 1996 which "details LTTE abuses which are undoubtedly terrorist activities", Senator Torricelli said that the group "regularly commits extrajudicial killings, and is responsible for disappearances, arbitrary arrests, detention and torture", and that it "regularly recruits children into its military forces."

"In the northern part of the island, the LTTE has expelled almost 46,000 inhabitants, almost the entire Muslim population, from their homes..." and the "LTTE has been held responsible for the assassination of an Indian Prime Minister, a President of Sri Lanka, a Presidential candidate and senior Sinhalese and Tamil political leaders," Senator Torricelli said. "It is clear that these activities are of a terrorist nature, and I believe they threaten the national security of the U.S." and are inimical to the Lankan government's efforts to push forward with the free-market economic policies the U.S. promotes.

The Senate also urged that the administration should expand its support for the anti-terrorist program in Sri Lanka.

TULF MP Urges End to US Support for Sri Lanka

Joseph Pararajasingham, TULF Member of Parliament for Batticaloa, during his recent three-week visit to the United States is reported to have urged US government officials to suspend giving military training to Sri Lankan soldiers and not to sell lethal weapons to Sri Lanka.

Mr. Pararajasingham met officials of the US State Department and US based NGOs during his stay. He met Mr Hiram A Ruiz and Katie Hope of the US Committee for Refugees (USCR) whose representatives visited Sri Lanka last year and produced a comprehensive report about the situation of the thousands of displaced people in the Tamil areas of the north. The MP briefed them about the worsening plight of refugees displaced by the ongoing war in the north of the island. He is also reported to have pointed out the failure on the part of the government to provide adequate food and medical

supplies to the affected people in the north.

Mr. Pararajasingham also met Steve Mann and Stephen Coffey of the State Department in Washington and provided details of the problems and destruction that people in the Northeast were suffering as a result of the ongoing war and the escalation in human rights abuses including disappearances of persons. He is also reported to have made an earnest request to the State Department to suspend military training to the Sri Lankan military by the US Green Berets and to stop selling lethal weapons to Sri Lanka so as to facilitate an end to the continuing war.

The MP also had stressed the need for the LTTE to participate in any resolution of the conflict and made it clear that any discussions excluding the LTTE could not bring an end to the war or lead to a resolution of the conflict.

US Senate Wants LTTE Designated as "Terrorist"

The United States Senate recently unanimously recommended that the Clinton administration should list Sri Lanka's Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as a terrorist organisation, according to reports from Washington. This is in the context of the Anti-Terrorist and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 which authorises the U.S. Secretary of State to designate an organisation as a foreign terrorist organisation.

Up to now the U.S. State Department has not listed any foreign "terrorist organisation" as authorised by this legislation. Last year, the U.S. Senate stated that it was concerned about the alarming toll that Tamil Tigers have taken on innocent civilians in Sri Lanka, and urged the administration to seriously consider making 750,000 U.S. dollars available in anti-terrorism funds to combat this problem.

Privatisation of Telecom

In another boost for the Colombo government's plans for privatising state corporations, Post and Telecommunications Minister Mangala Samaraweera, recently successfully concluded the selling of 35% of the shares of Sri Lanka Telecom to the Nippon Telephone and Telegraph Corporation of Japan.

Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation (NTT) of Japan will purchase a 35% equity stake in state-owned Sri Lanka Telecom for 225 million dollars. NTT aims to make the capital participation its first major step for its operation in South Asia. It is the first time for NTT to buy shares of a state-run telecom firm.

Sri Lanka Telecom has asked for NTT's assistance, including management participation, in business streamlining and facility modernisation programs before its eventual shift to private management. NTT may send engineers and managers to the Sri Lanka following the equity purchase.

It is also reported that the Nippon Telecommunications' offer to buy 35% of Sri Lanka Telecom shares for US dollars 225 million far exceeded the government's expectations. Informed sources say that the government would have been satisfied with a deal of US dollars 150 million. Before the deal was made with the Nippon Telephone, the value of 35% of Telecom shares were estimated to be a mere US\$ 119 million. This is described in Colombo financial circles as the largest ever privatisation deal in Sri Lanka. The success of the privatisation of the Telecom was immediately felt, in the manner in which labour unions were pacified, by means of persuasion, by the Minister, Samaraweera.

A story making its rounds in Colombo captures at least a part of the picture. As the story goes, a leader of the opposition UNP called the UNP union leaders at Telecom and reprimanded them for not displaying even a single poster opposing the Telecom privatisation. The union leaders reportedly told the party boss: "Why should we protest when we got shares of the Telecom, worth millions of rupees?"

The government's plans to sell Telecom shares to foreign investors began in 1995. Almost all trade unions at this giant communications facility of the government, protested vehemently against its privatisation. Telecom unions even formed a joint trade union front to oppose privatisation, with unions of the Electricity Board, the state banking sector and the Ports Authority. For two years,

the government had to shelve its plans to sell Telecom shares.

Minister Mangala Samaraweera appears to have worked quietly to win over the Telecom labour unions to the privatization move. According to the deal struck with the unions, the employees get 45 million shares of the Sri Lanka Telecom. The strength of the Telecom's present work force is 8200.

When asked, at a recent press conference, why Nippon Telecommunications made such a high offer, the representative of the Japanese company responded by suggesting that for them it was an investment for the future. Sri Lanka, he said, was the gateway to the telecommunications market in all of South Asia.

Sri Lanka presently possesses the most advanced telecommunications facilities in South Asia. With the entry to the market of AT&T, Bell, Eriksson, Nokia and a few other giants in the industry, the monopoly earlier enjoyed by Sri Lanka Telecom, was broken. Cellular phone networks now cover most parts of the island. Middle-class consumers and the business community no longer wait for years, or spend money on bribes, to obtain a 'government telephone.' With stiff competition among cellular telephone networks, telecommunication facilities are now available, as they say in Sri Lanka, 'without much trouble.'

Plan for Govt Complex Suspended

The President had directed her officials to stop work on the new Rs.125 million rupee (about 2.12 million US dollars) complex after people in the area protested that they would lose their homes. The privately-owned press had also mounted a vitriolic campaign against the proposal for what it described as a "Presidential Palace".

The government had planned to shift all key government administrative establishments including the defence headquarters and the official residence of the head of state to Sri Jayawardenapura in Kotte, a suburb of the capital Colombo. The 50-acre block of land earmarked for the construction of the complex would have displaced some 50 families who were promised compensation.

The previous government under former President J R Jayawardene constructed an imposing complex in Kotte and moved the parliament from central Colombo to Sri Jayawardenapura in 1982. Preliminary work such as land surveying and security consultations had already begun and residents in the area said they had been advised by authorities that they

would be compensated for the loss of their homes.

Housing Minister Indika Gunewardena earlier told parliament that moving the defence ministry alone would have freed some 80 acres of prime land in central Colombo with a commercial value of some 25 billion rupees (\$431 million). Moving other offices would free additional land valued at 1.2 billion rupees for commercial development, and therefore the proposal would have been a self-financing exercise without having made inroads into the public purse.

Gunewardena said shifting the residence of the head of state to a suburb would also save the public the inconvenience of closed roads due to the president's security requirements. "Furthermore, present restrictions in Colombo will adversely affect future investment in the city," he said.

Road blocks and military checkpoints are common in Colombo. Security is tight because of threats of assassination of political leaders.

New Court to Try PTA Cases

Sri Lanka is to set up a new High Court to try people charged under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister G L Peiris recently told the press that the new court, which is to be inaugurated on 15 August, was needed to dispose of cases quickly under the PTA.

"Although the main concern will be to dispose of cases under the PTA, it will have the jurisdiction of any other high court," Peiris told a news conference.

The government plans to open another high court in northern Vavuniya town next month, which will try people charged under the country's laws, the minister said. "We want to rekindle civil society that has been ravaged by the war for so long," Peiris said. Vavuniya, 220 km (135 miles) north of the capital Colombo, has long been the frontier town in the country's ethnic war.

Figures from the Attorney-General's office show that 966 people have been indicted under the Act since 1994.

The PTA was originally enacted in 1979 to deal with persons suspected of being involved in terrorist activities, but in actual practice the law has been used to take into custody and detain persons alleged to be involved in a wide range of anti-state activities. In addition to the PTA, emergency regulations promulgated under the public security legislation have also been generally used to arrest and detain persons. According to the Attorney-General's office at present 438 people were being tried under the PTA and emergency regulations.

Bombing on Church Kills 9: The LTTE in a statement dated 18 August said, "Two Sri Lankan Kfir bombers today at 9 AM bombed a Catholic Church in Vavunikulam (Vanni) killing 9 innocent Tamil civilians and critically wounding 15 more. The victims were among several hundred displaced Tamil refugees taking shelter in the church after being made homeless from government's 3 month long military operation Jeya Sikuru. Six of the dead have so far been identified but the remaining three bodies' reduced to bones and flesh' were too badly disfigured to recognise. The attack was similar to one carried out by Sri Lankan forces in 1995 when war planes deliberately killed scores of Tamils who the military asked to gather in Navalay church for safety.

The following is a list of the dead: Thesingarasa Thangamani (female, 48); Thesingarasa Vasanthakumari (female, 17); Nadarasa Pushpamalar (female, 41); Nadarasa Gajan (male, 4); Ponnuthurai Annamalar (female, 40); Thurairatnam Parameswary (female 46); and 3 bodies remain unidentified.

Norway Aid to Jaffna: The government of Norway has provided 300,000 US dollars as emergency support to people of the Jaffna peninsula in northern Sri Lanka, according officials of the Ministry of Planning. The money will be used for local vegetable seed multiplication in the Jaffna peninsula and for agricultural relief kits to displaced farmers.

This project is an outcome of a request for assistance made by President Chandrika Kumaratunga last year to the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations. The project will provide assistance for the production of quality varieties of vegetable seed, seedling and other fruit plants for people in the north.

U.S. Calls for End to Violence: The United States on 25 July strongly condemned a spate of attacks by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka and called on the Tigers to stop their interference with foreign ships.

"We urge the LTTE to cease all acts of terrorism. We join with Amnesty International in calling for the LTTE to stop immediately the killing of non-combatants and cease other human rights abuses," said James Foley, a deputy spokesman at the U S State Department.

The United States was particularly concerned by LTTE attacks on foreign vessels in Sri Lankan waters. Foley said in a statement that the LTTE had attacked an Indonesian-flag passenger ferry on July 1 and seized a North Korean cargo vessel and its crew on July 7. One North Korean crew member was killed in the incident.

"The United States strongly condemns the assassinations and the interference with shipping," he said. Foley said two parliamentarians from the Trincomalee area in Sri Lanka's eastern province were assassinated in July. Nine other civilians died in these attacks. "No group has claimed responsibility for these assassinations but we understand the Sri



Lankan official view the LTTE as the primary suspect," he said.

The United States supported a negotiated political settlement in Sri Lanka and believed that the Sri Lankan government's proposal for constitutional reform provided a solid basis for the peaceful resolution of the violence.

Trade Imbalance Between Sri Lanka and India: Trade imbalance between Sri Lanka and India has increased tremendously last year. The total value of imports by Sri Lanka from India in 1996 was well over 550 million US dollars while exports to India stood at only 50 million US dollars, leaving the trade imbalance largely in favour of India. During the talks held recently to examine the trade imbalance between the two countries, both sides agreed that India should look into the possibility of removing non-tariff barriers while Sri Lanka should expand its product base.

Reports from Colombo quoted an Indian official as saying India had opened its huge market for Sri Lankan products by reducing tariffs on 81 items in favour of Sri Lanka. The official said they are studying the possibility of adding more items to this list. India has also agreed to help Sri Lanka upgrade its infrastructure facilities and to boost tourism between the two countries.

Citizens Committees in Colombo: Special citizens' committees are to be set up in the capital Colombo and its suburbs at the instance of the government in an effort to minimise inconvenience caused to Tamils during military and police raids for suspected "Tiger operatives".

"Every police area in the city of Colombo will have a citizens' committee. Some of these committees have already been set up," Deputy Defence Minister Anuraddha Ratwatte told parliament on 8

August. The minister said such committees would minimise the inconvenience caused to Tamils taken into custody by the security forces for questioning.

Police would check the bona fides of these people with the citizens' committee members and release them within three hours, he said.

Hundreds of persons belonging to the Tamil community are often taken into custody on mere suspicion for questioning by police and soldiers during regular cordon and search operations in the capital. Human rights activists say the Tamils are detained for prolonged periods during which they are often harassed and intimidated.

Japan to Set Up Industrial Park: Seethawaka Industrial Park, one of the largest infrastructure development projects in Sri Lanka, will be constructed by Japan at Avissawela in Sri Lanka's Western Province. According to industrial sector sources in Colombo, with a total area of 168 hectares, the park will be set up by Kumagia Cumi of Japan, at a cost of over 33.9 million US dollars which is funded by the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund of Japan. The sources noted the park will create 40,000 jobs directly or indirectly when completed.

Fishing Boats Set on Fire : 32 fishing boats were set on fire in a raid on a harbour in Southern Province of Sri Lanka on 23 July. The police alleged that a group of Tamil Tigers raided the Pattanangala Fisheries Harbour near Yala National Park and set ablaze 32 fishing vessels and 22 camps of migrant fishermen.

All fishermen were ordered out of their camps and questioned at length by the attackers on the whereabouts of a military detachment, the police claimed. The fishermen were released unharmed on the following morning. But some fishermen were ordered to flee the harbour and into the surrounding jungles.

Probe into Money Collection in Canada: Canadian law enforcement agencies have launched a massive probe into the money collection activities on behalf of the LTTE in Toronto. The exercise that began on 7 August is being conducted by a team of 24 persons comprising 13 men and 11 women. The core of the investigating team is from the National Security Division and the Counter-Subversive Unit of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It is reported that the operation will initially target more than a thousand Tamils living in Canada and contributing money to the LTTE and its front organisations including the World Tamil Movement. Canada has become the home to more than 150,000 Tamils from Sri Lanka.

LOSING THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE PEOPLE

By Dr. S. Narapalasingam

The main killing fields in Sri Lanka are currently in the Vanni region and parts of the Eastern Province. Sporadic attacks by the LTTE typical of any guerrilla movement are also reported in parts of the North-East presently under the control of the military. Following each violent incident, the numbers killed and wounded are announced by each side. Since independent reporters are not permitted in the areas of conflict, the losses declared by each side are widely believed to be understated. Nevertheless, informed analysts have commented that the real losses are much more than those claimed by each side and that neither side can afford to continue the war with the same intensity incurring losses of such magnitude. The economic consequences of the war are felt increasingly by all the people within and outside the war zone. They are tired of the hardships faced and losses incurred as a result of the protracted war and are eager to get back to normal life.

The Hopeless War Strategies

The fact that both sides cannot achieve their separate objectives militarily is evident from the past failed attempts either to force the government to yield to the demand for separation or compel the LTTE to give up its armed struggle and accept the devolution proposals. Despite this reality, which came to the fore once again recently following the two stunning setbacks suffered within a space of ten days in Vavuniya and Puliyanakulam by the government forces in their Operation "Jaya Sikurui" launched on May 13 to open a land route to Jaffna peninsula through the rebel held area between Vavuniya and Killinochchi, the Government has declared that its "war for peace" strategy would be pursued. It is to be noted that after incurring high casualties (over 1000 soldiers killed or wounded) and losing several millions worth of weaponry since then, the government forces have captured just about a third of the 55-mile long highway. According to newspaper reports, more than 20,000 soldiers had deserted the army and even after offering amnesty five times since 1995 several thousands have not returned.

The cost to the LTTE in lost cadres is also reported to be very high in relation to the total strength of its fighting force. Nevertheless, it has intensified its attacks not only in the North but also in the East to retaliate against "Jaya Sikurui". The actions of either side far from winning the hearts and minds of the people have only exacerbated the ethnic division and hatred. There is a serious conflict between the short-term and long-term objectives of the Government. In so far as the LTTE is concerned, there is only one objective as evident from the code name "Do or Die" given to its current operation.

The "Do or Die" stand

A highly knowledgeable correspondent wrote recently: "The Tigers are more engrossed in the immediacy of things. It is the imminent short run that matters now. To them life is a game of short runs whereas in the long run, we all are dead." If this is the attitude, why should they worry about winning the hearts and minds of the people from any long-term perspective?

The attitude of the fortunate Tamils, who are not in this ill-fated situation where death is imminent could be either one of admiration and encouragement that propels the combatants to embrace martyrdom or that of sorrow and prevention of unnecessary deaths by changing their minds to pursue other ways of achieving a realistic and achievable goal. It is regrettable that many in the Tamil diaspora have not weighed calmly these two alternatives. The argument of those who maintain that the movement whose members are dying for a cause they believe in should be encouraged unreservedly is to say the least irresponsible. The main motivation behind this stand is their instinct for vengeance. This does not allow them to think about the long-term interest of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, who unlike them cannot leave Sri Lanka or prefer to stay there. The concerns of the two groups are different. The concern of many Tamils settled abroad is the desire to make the occasional sentimental visits to their previous habitats, while enjoying the comforts of their affluent lifestyles in their

adopted countries. The concern of the majority of those remaining in Sri Lanka is very basic, namely, to live in peace and have the means to support their families.

The abduction and killing of Muslims in the East not forgetting the forced expulsion of some 70,000 Muslims from Jaffna in 1990 by the LTTE must be seen from its scheme of priorities. The Irakkakandy incident in which 35 Muslims were abducted (only the Maulavi and six students were later released) and another in Toppur in which 6 other Muslims were shot dead had brought doubts in the minds of many Muslims on the sincerity of the earlier regret expressed by the LTTE spokesman that the forced exodus of Muslims from Jaffna and Mannar was a mistake. The brutal killing of Trincomalee district MP Mr. Mohammed Mahroof along with five others including a four year old Muslim boy on 20 July is also alleged by the Police to be the work of the LTTE. This happened just 14 days after the TULF MP Mr. A. Thangathurai was cruelly killed in front of school children in the same Trincomalee district. On the previous day 22 boats from Muslim fishermen in the area were seized by the LTTE and ransom demanded. The fact that Mr. Mahroof was assassinated on his way to negotiate for the release of the captives highlighted the complete disregard the militant leadership has for the long-term consequences that arise from its impulsive actions. Columnists have not failed to draw a parallel between the present distrustful Tamil-Muslim relations and the suspicious Sinhala-Tamil relations caused by the rash actions of the Tamil and Sinhalese leaders.

Insensitive Attitude

Civilian deaths due to lack of food and essential medicines in the Vanni region have been reported. Aid officials have stated that the food shortage in the Vanni region is so acute that children asking for milk are given one meal of "kanji" a day. Some of the 200,000 people displaced by the recent military operations there are living under trees or just in the open. The refugee camps are bursting at the seams. Some of the refugees have been displaced several times and are living like nomads. To the LTTE, these are effective weapons for use in the propaganda battle. Government's argument is that the supply of lifesaving essential goods to the areas not under its control helps the rebels. All the indications are that the rebels are neither starving nor they are in need of medicines. In this situation, the talk of winning the hearts and minds of the people is meaningless.

The actions of the LTTE in preventing cargo vessels bringing food and other essential items to the North not only hurt

the civilians but also provide the valid defence for the Government to tell the world that its humanitarian concern for the suffering people is frustrated by the LTTE. All passenger transport to the north by ship was suspended after the private vessel "Missen" that ferried Tamil returnees from Mannar and the Vanni region to Jaffna was destroyed by the Tigers. As a result several thousands of Tamils were stranded in Mannar and Trincomalee unable to go to Jaffna. In a statement issued on 15 July, the LTTE stated that they would attack all ships travelling to Jaffna peninsula. The reason given by the LTTE is that the ships are "legitimate military targets because they are carrying supplies to the military." There is a saying - the drum that is played during festivals gets beaten on both sides! The people are like this drum and are getting worn-out through intense use.

Rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in the North-East have also been affected by the disruption. Here too the Government has a valid defence in that it is the LTTE that is obstructing its humanitarian work that would benefit the people in the areas under its control. Many civilians who returned to the Jaffna peninsula after the conclusion of Operation Riviresa continue to live in refugee camps and temporary sheds. Their houses have been either completely destroyed or are unsafe. It is also alleged that few houses are occupied by the security forces. The infrastructure that existed for civilian use has crumpled. The supply of electricity and telephone facility remain restricted. Medical facilities are woefully inadequate. The mail service too is irregular. All these show the continuing anomalous state even in the areas under the control of the army. The claim that the costly military operation to open the land route to Jaffna has been motivated by humanitarian considerations seems to lack credibility, considering the contradictory actions and inactions in the captured Tamil areas.

Helping the Antagonists

The killing of Tamils by fellow Tamils and other actions that drive many of them to foreign lands at great risk and cost weaken the Tamil community. The importance of the behaviour of the troops in the North-East towards civilians in winning the battle for their hearts and minds has not been taken seriously by the Government. Any guerrilla movement cannot succeed without the support of the people and therefore it cannot afford to give any chances for the enemy to appropriate this vital element. Its strategy would obviously be to demonize the enemy and make the people hate it as much as possible at every opportunity. The military has on several occasions fallen into this trap

set by the rebels and has indiscriminately retaliated against the Tamil civilians. Human rights violations in various forms continue to occur, though these are less frequent than before. Several million worth of weapons, including long range artillery guns used by the LTTE in the war were captured from the army in the earlier attacks.

Amnesty International from time to time releases reports containing information in some detail on human rights abuses by both the security forces and members of the LTTE. The special reports of the UTHR (Jaffna) also provide detailed information and description of the various reprisal actions and disappearances of civilians. These include specific distressful incidents such as abduction, rape, torture and harassment of civilians. The Sinhalese leaders who are assisting the various NGOs because of their commitment to human rights protection and restoration of peace deserve to be admired and praised. The involvement of women in protesting against various atrocities committed by the security forces is noteworthy.

The actions of the military tend to feed the ideological thrust of the LTTE. The latter is crucial for it to be deemed as a central force by both the Government and the Tamil people. Hence, its leadership has a vested interest in ensuring that the conditions for justifying the armed struggle remain intact. The justification to continue the rebellion to the very end is provided by the security forces through various acts of repression that makes the people insecure in their presence. There is also the propaganda war that has a bearing on the above, which the Government has not taken seriously. By not allowing independent media personnel to travel freely into the war zone and the areas under the control of the security forces in the North-East, the Government has in effect withdrawn from this war. There is no doubt that the behaviour of the security forces would have been better had independent reporters been allowed to remain permanently in the areas under military control.

In Vadamaratchy, Col. Larry Wijeratne seems to have won the hearts and minds of the residents there. He is said to be "one man in the military who has understood the state of mind of those who have, and are, undergoing severe trauma as a result of the war." The special report No. 9 of UTHR (Jaffna) released on 7th June 1997 has all the relevant details. If only other commanders had acted humanely like Col. Wijeratne, the battle for the hearts and minds of the Tamil people would have been won by the Government a long time ago.

Had both sides agreed to stop fight-

ing and start talking a long time ago, that would have won the hearts and minds of the people in all the communities. Both sides must be aware that at some point the talking has to begin. Talking early is desirable in situations where neither side can expect to achieve complete victory, as after a stage the additional losses incurred will be useless from the standpoint of arriving at a fair and just solution to the conflict.

Credibility Gap

Government's declared intent to win the hearts and minds of the Tamil people has not yet been translated into any action programme. This lapse is also typical of the familiar failures of past governments to implement in earnest their proclaimed policies to treat the Tamils as equal citizens of Sri Lanka. In fact, the present conflict has its origin in this very failure to address the day to day problems of the Tamils, which alienated them from the Lankan citizenry. The happenings in Trincomalee have served as the barometer to gauge the sincerity of the main political parties, whose support base is in the South in accepting the concept of a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious Lankan society. The developments taking place there continue to cast doubt on the application of this concept.

Since the PA Government assumed office, the leadership has made several statements that raised the hopes of the minorities at these times but soon vanished by the inaction to put into effect the stated policies and reforms. The list of such disappointments is endless and their cumulative adverse effect on rebuilding the lost trust is tremendous. Strangely, the government has been unconcerned about the damage this gap between the pronouncements of its leaders and the contradictory actions of its civil and military establishments can do to its own credibility, let alone winning the hearts and minds of the suffering people. Prof. G.L. Peiris, Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs who is also presently the Minister responsible for National Integration and Ethnic Affairs has been trying very hard to close this gap but there has been hardly any movement on the implementation side. He has openly stated that there has been enough talking and that the time has come for action. Previous governments too had admitted that the Tamils had genuine grievances but did very little to eliminate them. It appears that government as an administrative institution functions in Sri Lanka in a peculiar way, as it has a different agenda from that declared publicly by the President, who is also the head of the Cabinet of Ministers.

Thus, in practice there seems to be some unclear separation between the policy-making and the administrative institutions of the Government. A glaring example of this gap is in the field of human rights. Here too actions have been too little or superficial and ineffective in relation to the big publicity given to the Government's commitments to respect basic human rights. The intention to expand and strengthen the provisions relating to human rights in the present constitution has been announced at various times. But what has happened since then in the observance of the very principles which the Government claims to be committed to calls into question the effectiveness of the proposed provisions per se in protecting the basic rights of all citizens.

The 64 million dollar question is whether this is a permanent feature of the Sri Lankan body politic that is beyond annihilation. The Human Rights Task Force (HRTF) which was first established by Emergency Regulations in 1991 to function as a watchdog for preventing the violations of the human rights of persons detained in custody without judicial orders became defunct when the Emergency lapsed in 1994. In 1995, with the Emergency again in force the HRTF was re-established. The new Emergency Regulations by which it was set up also provided for the President to give the necessary directives to the Heads of the Armed Forces and the Police to facilitate the work of the HRTF in achieving the noble objective. The requirements that a person making an arrest identify himself by name and rank, that every person be informed of the reason for his arrest and that a person arrested be afforded reasonable means of communication with a relative or friend were, in actual practice, breached and no action was taken against the violators.

Although in November 1996 the Government announced its intention to open an HRTF office in Jaffna, apart from taking some preliminary steps nothing else happened. The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRC) was established by an Act of Parliament in August 1996. The decision to set up a national institution for the protection of human rights in the form of the HRC was taken after severe international criticism of human rights violations in Sri Lanka, notably during the rule of the previous Government. However, the HRC is not yet ready to "monitor executive and administrative practices, investigate complaints of fundamental rights violations and advise the government how to comply with international human rights standards." The main function assigned to the HRTF was more specific in that it concerned the protec-

tion of the human rights of those detained without judicial powers and involved considerable field work. Had the HRTF been absorbed into the HRC, instead of closing it down on 30 June '97, the seriousness of Government's commitment to prevent human rights violations would not have been called into question by various national and international human rights organizations.

The various ways whereby the declared intentions and policies of the governments in Sri Lanka are allowed to remain dormant are:

- (i) Not to make any effort at implementation;
- (ii) Not to provide the funds to the relevant institutions;
- (iii) Not to provide the required number of staff;
- (iv) Not to create independent institutions even when the nature of their functions warrant freedom from government interference; and
- (v) Appoint friends and party loyalists to head the institutions which have some degree of autonomy.

It must be mentioned here that decisions are executed swiftly when these have the potential to yield monetary or political gains in the short term. The cry for greater degree of autonomy stems from the necessity to divest from the centre not merely the power to formulate legislations and policies for the development of the regions and welfare of the people there but importantly to implement them without any inhibitions such as those indicated above. After experiencing the way even the meagre powers devolved to the Provincial Councils were denied by the administration of the central Government, the Tamil political parties are insisting on the retraction of Article 26(a) of the draft devolution proposals. This permits the President to dissolve a Regional Council when there is a clear danger to the unity and sovereignty of the country. The Tamil leaders are apprehensive that this could be misused at some time to take away the powers devolved to the predominantly Tamil region. Prof. A.J. Wilson recently pointed out the loopholes in the devolution proposals mainly from the viewpoint of retaining the right to exercise freely the devolved powers in implementing the policies and programmes relating to the subjects in the regional list. These would not have been raised as important issues, had the constitutional provisions and approved legislation been implemented earlier in good faith.

There is no doubt that the original draft proposals put forward by the present Government for devolution have been carefully prepared bearing in mind the

restrictions that obstructed the execution of the devolved powers under the Provincial Councils Act. Perhaps this may be one reason why the Provincial Council system has recently been described as a "sham." The good intention of the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs is not doubted one bit. What is incomprehensible is to have not acted within the existing legal framework to rectify the past acts of omission and commission and instead allowing the people to endure the hardships. They are expected to wait for the new set of proposals to come into effect and three agonising years have passed without any sign of light at the end of the tunnel.

Renewed Hope?

President Chandrika Kumaratunga's letter addressed to all her ministers on the implementation of the official languages policy, which requires the use of all three official languages - Sinhalese, Tamil and English - in all government correspondence has received much publicity in the media. Although similar statements in the past failed to produce tangible results, the hope of achieving the desired result is high this time, since definite time-frames have been stipulated for complying with her various instructions. There were no impediments before that prevented the immediate implementation of the law relating to the use of Tamil as an official language. The very fact that matters concerning the minorities on which clear policies exist, requires the personal intervention of the President is indicative of the inherent deficiency in the system of governance. It is also strange that the implementation of the official languages statute needed the approval of the cabinet of Ministers recently! These practices appear extra-ordinary in a democracy with an elected legislative assembly and a cabinet of Ministers responsible for framing and implementing policies.

Until the minority communities believe by experience that legislation and approved policies of governments are truly beneficial in alleviating their difficulties caused by various discriminatory and worrying practices of the State, any number of assurances will not win the confidence of the minorities. Assurances of future actions will no longer be taken seriously by the people, unless they have some valid grounds to believe through experience that anticipated actions will definitely come soon. What happens in practice during the coming weeks and months will tell whether or not the renewed hope will soon lead to a permanent and credible political solution to the national problem and reconciliation between the communities. □

FIFTY YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE OF INDIA AND SRI LANKA

By K T Rajasingham, Bangkok, Thailand

India and Pakistan will celebrate their fifty years of independence on 15 August, whilst, Sri Lanka would celebrate its fifty years of independence on 4 February, 1998. These two countries have undergone fifty tumultuous years of survival as independent nations in the region. What does it mean to be independent for fifty years to the people, nation and the region? This is a discursive epitomised discourse, dealing with contrasting political scenarios of both, India and Sri Lanka.

At the early stages, India was involved with fighting wars with Pakistan and China. Indian and Pakistani troops clashed in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir on 27 October 1947, barely two months after their independence from Britain. For the second time, a full-scale Indo-Pakistan war over Kashmir broke out on 3 January 1965, and again on 3-17 December 1971 - Pakistan fought a war over East Pakistan - later to be called Bangladesh, ended in the surrender of 90,000 Pakistani troops. India and China too were locked in fierce battle in 1962. The nub of the problem was the discovery of the Chinese highway, from Tibet to Sinkiang, built across the desolate Aksai Chin plateau, which British foreign maps in the nineteenth century, had alternately included and excluded from the Indian empire.

Sri Lanka, an island, composed of diverse ethnic and religious communities with a majority Sinhalese, predominantly Buddhist. There are two main Tamil groups, the Sri Lankan Tamils, descendants with a long history to the country and the Up-Country Tamils of the Indian origin, brought over by the British colonialist and a vibrant Muslim community, who also speak Tamil, striving to maintain their own identity. The country failed to take note of the challenges ahead, also neglected to encourage diversity in the society, by discouraging discontentment, to promote unity. The dissension in Sri Lanka, unveils with rivalling territorial, as well as nationhood claims and emotive contests over the interpretation of the country's history.

In 1971, Sri Lanka plunged into an unprecedented blood-bath, when the Janata Vimukthi Perumuna (JVP - People's Liber-

ation Front) a left-wing organisation, mainly a Sinhalese group, led by Moscow educated Rohana Wijeyaweera launched a Soviet-style insurrection, to seize power. Ceylon (Sri Lanka) armed forces had never fought a war, had to plead for military assistance from several countries, including India, to resist hundreds of JVP cadres, both boys and girls, mostly using home made weapons. Indian soldiers were deployed, but India claimed that, they did not participate in any offensive. When the insurrection was suppressed by the government, led by Srimavo Bandaranaike, more than 25,000 Sinhalese youths killed. Again in 1987, The JVP launched attack on the government forces. The armed forces suppressed the second insurrection, where 50,000 Sinhalese youths were killed. Also, the leader of the JVP, Rohana Wijeyaweera and his deputy, Upatissa Gamanayake, were captured alive by the security forces and killed by them, in November 1989.

There were numerous state-orchestrated ethnic disturbances in Sri Lanka, where the Sinhalese goons and security forces, jointly torched and killed Tamils with impunity and their properties desecrated, depredated and demolished, in the capital Colombo also in the down south of Sri Lanka. The notable ethnic disturbances were that of 1956, 1958, followed by that of 1977, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982 and the 1983 holocausts. More than one hundred thousand Tamils were killed, in that carefully planned state-orchestrated violence against non-combatant Tamil civilians.

Earlier, Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian Father of the nation, was shot and killed on 30 January 1948, by a Hindu fanatic. Indra Gandhi, was shot and killed by her own Sikh body-guards, inside the premises of the Prime Minister's official residence on 31 October 1984, as revenge-killing for ordering the armed forces to march into the Golden Temple of the Sikhs. Her son, Rajiv Gandhi succeeded her as the Prime Minister, initiated the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement of 29 July 1987, subsequently alleged responsible for the death of more than 10,000 Tamils in the North-Eastern provinces of Sri

Lanka, met with the fatal bomb explosion at Sriperambudhur, South India, on 21 May 1991.

The Sri Lankan government passed several legislative measures, viewed a form of legislative terrorism, to harass Tamils. D S Senanayake, the first Prime Minister of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), disfranchised nearly one million Tamils of the Indian origin, voteless and stateless. During the time of disenfranchisement, Tamils of the Indian origin had seven elected members of Parliament. Whilst on a usual morning horse-ride, Senanayake fell off his horse and died on the following day, 22 March 1952. Later,

S W R D Bandaranaike, who introduced Sinhala language as the official language and adamantly denied equal recognition to the language of the Tamils, succumbed to fatal gun-shot injuries by a chauvinist Buddhist clergy at his private residence, and died on 26 September 1958. Later, Ranatunge Premadasa, the President of Sri Lanka, responsible for launching of the second stage of the war (Eelam War - 2) with the Tamil militants, was a target of a bomb explosion and died on 1 May 1993, instantaneously. A presidential aspirant, and former minister for national security, Lalith Athuladhimali, who was responsible for launching on 26 May 1986, "Operation Liberation" in Vadamardachy, a sprawling coastal region in the North of the Jaffna City, was killed. The Presidential candidate, Gamini Disanayake, responsible for torching down the Jaffna public library in 1982, one of the biggest libraries in South East Asia, died in a bomb explosion, on 23 October 1994, whilst addressing an election rally.

Reports on the life of the present President of Sri Lanka, surface at regular intervals and recently Srisena Coorey, a former minister and a political stalwart of the United National Party (UNP), is under arrest, on allegation that, he planned to murder the President of the country. Also, an opposition member of Parliament shot and killed another ruling party member of Parliament. The gun-trotting culture, responsible for innumerable heinous crimes against humanity, has come to stay permanently in India and Sri Lanka.

There were threats of separation at the initial stages in India, but appropriate measures were taken to diffuse separatist trends, to cause integration into one composite nation. Since of late, the threat of militancy looms in the North-Eastern Indian states and is developing into an alarming proportion. Sri Lanka failed to settle amicably issues relating to the minority Tamils. Today, the country is at the verge of collapse, due to the protracted civil war and no one knows, who, if any one is in control of the country. The government staged Eelam War 1 and 2 and

the present government, deeply is involved with Eelam war 3, to cause the militants to submit. Due to deep distrust on both sides, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LUE) broke off negotiations with the government, which resulted in the escalation of violence. Up to date, more than 80,000 non-combatant Tamil civilians and about 5,000 non-combatant Sinhalese civilians killed due to the antagonist military campaigns in the country. As the military strength of both parties, the Government armed forces and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, are on display, up to date, approximately 10,000 Sri Lankan security forces, and more than 15,000 Tamil militants perished in this on-going ethnic turmoil.

India has consistently evolved ways and means to hold the nation together, integrated without any threat of separation. In 1976, during the emergency rule (1975-77), Indra Gandhi introduced the forty-second amendment to the India's constitution, to include the word 'secular' in its preamble, to make the country a secular state, but, Sri Lanka failed to hold the nation together by scrapping the entrenched secularist article in the constitution. The Sinhalese leadership promulgated two separate constitutions, one after the other, in 1972 and in 1988, to enforce their ethnocentricity and sectarianism, but the validity and legality of both constitutions are of questionable nature and could be challenged in any international constitutional tribunals.

Secularism and sectarianism, two conflicting political positions, of which India adopted the former, while Sri Lanka, the latter one. These two contrasting positions brought about telling effects on the body politics of the two countries. The battle between secular and the observant Hindus, over the role of religion in daily life, has become increasingly intense and focused sharply to regenerate a state based on religion. Anyhow, Indian leaders, take great efforts to arrest the surge of Hinduttuva political resurgence, to forge ahead with their secularist stand. Whereas Sri Lanka, shed the secularist image to emerge strongly a sectarian Buddhist state. Secularism is a unifying factor in a plural society alike India, to integrate the country into a unified nationhood. In Sri Lanka, the sectarian Buddhist approach, has caused disintegration and division in the country. Historically, these two countries have taken different but lengthy, winding, moreover, weird paths, to reach this milestone.

India and secularism

Secularism is the single point oriented issue that determines the destiny and demises of several governments in India.

The word secularism, with its magical political components, has already seen the fall of two governments and the rise of the third one recently, within a period of one year.

Secularism, in the Indian context means that, religions have no place in the civil affairs of a country. The concept promotes, a secular state in India, not constitutionally tied to a particular religion, nor does it seeks either to promote, or interfere with the promotion of any religious beliefs in the country. Adapting secularism as a pivotal concept, an attempt by the state, to remain neutral and impartial in extending patronage and benefits to citizens of all religions, castes and creed.

At the height of the partition of India, that resulted with the segmentation of West and East Pakistan, into a Moslem state of Pakistan, the Hinduttuva leaders of India, searched for a common denominator resolution to keep the plural society intact. The search led to the birth of a secular democratic India. Secularism in the Indian context, is a neo-theocratic state, and the state as such, does not have its own religion, but all religions are equal, by which the state would not make any distinction on the grounds of religion. This is what secularism in India is all about.

Late C Rajagopalachari, the first Governor General of India, former Chief Minister of the Madras Presidency and an erudite scholar, wrote about secularism as follows. "Secularism is an ill-understood word. If a state declares that its government shall be secular, it does not mean that, its rulers or Parliament will be agnostics or atheists. It does not mean that, it dislike and discourages religion. Secularism does not mean that, the behaviour and conduct of the people will be entirely looked after by the police and that temples and mosques and cathedrals will be only of architectural interest."

India is a plural society, second populous nation, with majority Hindus, also possess the single largest Moslem population in the world. Absence of a binding provision to integrate and keep the country united, would have endangered its pluralistic nature with chaos, disorder and disintegration. The secular policies have so far sustained in India, posited a composite nationhood with a unitary ethnicity and a pluralistic federated state.

Though the concept of secularism included in the preamble, the meaning of the term finds no definition in the constitution. Without a specific definition on secularism according to the Indian concept, the term has become the most pronounced concept, prolific as well as protean in nature, depending on the numer-

ous interpretations given by individuals.

According to the present leaders of India, opposite to secularism is communalism. In the Indian context, communalism means showing partiality towards a certain community, ethnic group or religious group. Desecration and demolition of the Babri Masjid mosque and the inaction of the Congress Government led by P V Narasimha Rao, had made a big dent in the credentials and confidentiality of Indian secularism. Moslems and the other minorities feel that, the secularism, boasted and hailed as the panacea, is today the most compromised phenomenon. Today, the word secularism has acquired a new meaning, a new dimension and found new mode of expressions. The coalition of the democratic forces in India, a newly emerging social and political elites, has begun to identify themselves closely, with the new doctrinaire definitions to the concept.

The Bharatya Janata Party (BJP), considered the bastion of the Hinduttuva, extreme right wing forces in the Indian political arena and its popularity is on the rise at present. To arrest the fast emerging popularity, the other political parties brand the BJP, a communal force, determined to create a Hinduttuva India, which would endanger the national unity and integration. Thirteen party's coalition United Front government, led by the Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, along with Indra Congress, under the leadership of Sitaram Kesari, strongly opposes the BJP, adopting all sorts of manoeuvres to rally the secular forces, to off-set the steady growth of the BJP. In a recent interview, L K Advani, the leader of the BJP, stoically claimed that, he believes in the Hinduttuva aspect of the secularism. Advani admonished, "Justice for all and the appeasement of none," is the secularist policy he believes. He stated that, Hinduism believes in monotheism and the unitary nationhood of mankind. Equality, justice, fair-play are the hallmarks of BJP's secular approach, added Advani.

India began to adopt a policy of constructive engagement with its neighbours. Recently signed the landmark, Ganga water sharing treaty with Bangladesh. India and Pakistan were estranged neighbours for the last fifty years. On 24 June, as a fiftieth anniversary present, India and Pakistan took the first positive step of entering into a sustained, bilateral dialogue on Jammu and Kashmir and all other outstanding issues between the two countries, by setting up a mechanism, which included the formation of joint working groups at appropriate levels, to address problems in an integrated manner. These agreements augur well for India and its neighbours.

Sri Lanka and Sectarianism

Secularism in a plural society is accepted as a unifying factor, whereas politics is ephemeral and factionalised. Anyhow, factionalised partisan politics continues to prevail and dominate the political arena in Sri Lanka. The country strayed away from single nationalism to plural nationalism, during the British colonial days and gradually emerged to adopt Buddhist Sinhalese ethnocentric majoritarian sectarianism.

Ceylon to be called Sri Lanka, came into effect on 22 May 1972, after the promulgation of a republican constitution, predicated by the authors as a natural creation of their autochthonous culture. The questionable issue of legality and the validity of repealing the existing constitution, to adopt entirely a new one, full of predictions, was the forerunner to ethnic war, separation and division.

The country received independence on 4 February 1948. The constitution provided by the British colonial rulers, continued even after the independence. According to the Ceylon (Constitution) Order-in-Council, 1946, Section 29(2), which reads as follows:

29 (2) No such law shall-

(a) prohibit or restrict the free exercise of any religion; or

(b) make persons of any community or religion liable to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of other communities or religion are not made liable; or

(c) confer on persons of any community or religion any privilege or advantage which is not conferred on persons of other communities or religions; or

(d) alter the constitution of any religious body except with the consent of the governing authority of that body.

(3) Any law made in contravention of subsection (2) of this section shall, to the extent of such contravention, be void.

The above was an entrenched clause in the constitution. Even if correct procedures adopted, either adhered to repeal or amend the constitution, the entrenched clause 29(2) cannot be neither repealed nor amended. The repeal of the constitution, which involved the repeal of clause 29(2) was void. The secularist nature, held entrenched, poised to unify the country, was illegitimately scrapped, but the Tamils, up to date, failed to challenge it in any international constitutional tribunals regarding the legality of the repeal of the said article and the validity and legality of the new constitution.

The new constitution introduced Buddhism, for the first time, as the official religion of the state. Also found, stronger emphasis to safeguard Buddhism, in-

cluded in the 1978 constitution, as well in the new constitutional proposals, put forward by the present government.

The constitution of 1972, states about Buddhism as follows:

Article (6) "The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place, and accordingly it shall be the duty of the state to protect and foster Buddhism."

The constitution of 1978, states about Buddhism as follows:

Article (9) "The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the state to protect and foster the Buddha Sasana."

The devolution proposal of the present Peoples' Alliance (PA) Government of Chandrika Kumaratunge, in its draft constitutional proposals of 16 January 1996, states regarding Buddhism, as follows:

Chapter II Buddhism

7* (1) The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha Sasana, while assuring to all religions the rights granted by Article 15(1) and 15(2).

(2) The state shall consult the Supreme Council in all matters pertaining to the protection and fostering of the Buddha Sasana.

(3) For the purpose of this Article "Supreme Council" means a Council established by law in consultation with Maha Sangha.

* Article 7 (Formerly Article 6 in the working drafts of the new constitution), shall be an "entrenched provision" requiring a 213 majority in Parliament and the approval of the people at a referendum for amendment.

From the above references, any perspicuous observer would realise that, Buddhism has ensconced in the Sinhala social fabric, warranting Sinhalese ethnocentrism to change the country into a theocratic form of government.

The day Buddhist Sinhalese leaders got rid of the secular aspect in the constitution, failed to pay heed to the genuine aspirations of the national minorities and insisted on a unitary sectarian form of government to maintain a dominant Sinhalese nationalism, instead of a composite Sri Lankan nationalism, that day brought about dissension and destruction. India in the meantime, continued to reinforce its commitment to secularism, to integrate the pluralistic society and to unify the nation. The Indian constitution could be termed as a quasi-federal form of government, inherent with strong unitary tendencies. The Indian constitution portrays an appearance of a federal form in nor-

mal times, but the appearance could easily be converted into a strong unitary form, during the times of emergency. Therefore, the Indian constitution could be summed up as a unique federal-unitary mix.

A federated unitary form with secularism enforced vigorously, keeps India together united, whereas a theocratic unitary sectarian government, focuses on a majoritarian numerical supremacy, eroded unity and pushed the country towards the brink of disintegration. The two contrasting political scenarios are important. During the first half century, Sri Lanka has taken the wrong direction to sectarianism, resulted in bloody insurrection for separation. Whereas India, after the separation of Pakistan and the

1947-48, bloody Hindu-Muslim riots, that killed several thousands, the leadership cautiously did a soul-searching exercise, to adopt policies to hold the country together, and integrate people within the fabric of a composite nationhood.

Fifty long years, is a very long period in the history of a country. In both countries, earlier the British colonialists united and merged numerous independent states into one country - India and Sri Lanka. After losing West and East Pakistan, Indian leaders evolved ways and means to forge unity and hold together. Referring historically, Tamils and Sinhalese were never united at any given period of time in Sri Lanka, up to the arrival of the Western colonialists. The Britishers forged the merger of the two sovereign nations into one country and granted independence in 1947. Lack of political vision caused unity to elude, great complexities prevail and the threat of separation is there, to loom for ever.

It would be a perfunctory attempt, if failed as peroration of this discourse, to recapitulate the real expectations of the people and the dismay they experienced in India and Sri Lanka during the last fifty years of their Independence. When India and Sri Lanka obtained Independence from the Britishers, ordinary people, the sons of the soil, believed and yearned that, milk and honey would flow thenceforth. Unfortunately leaders who fought for the freedom, failed to take note of the need to develop the economy of their respective countries to provide a contended and stable livelihood to their citizens.

Monetary units of both the countries are rupees and cents. One US dollar, quoted around 3. 5 to 4 Indian Rupees in 1947 and 4 to 4. 5 Ceylon (Sri Lankan) Rupees in 1948, but today it is around 36 Indian and 58 Sri Lankan Rupees. Currency units lost their luster, as the haywire set in, due to a frequent devaluation. Rupee lost its value regularly, against major currencies in the world. To record

(Continued on next page)

SPOTLIGHT ON TULF MP JOSEPH PARARAJASINGHAM

By D B S Jeyaraj

Tamil United Liberation Front Member of Parliament from the Eastern district of Batticaloa Joseph Pararajasingham is a man very much in the news today. His recently concluded three week sojourn in the United States of America has evoked a mild stir in Sri Lankan Government circles. The chief reason being Mr Pararajasingham's forthright condemnation in the USA of the human rights record of the present Government of Sri Lanka. He also protested against the training of Sri Lankan troops by the US "Green Berets".

The Batticaloa Parliamentarian's comments abroad and consequent Government reaction to it are in a sense reminiscent of what occurred nearly 18 years ago when TULF Secretary-General Appalalai Amirthalingam was Leader of the Opposition. His criticism on an overseas trip of the then UNP Government led by J

(Continued from page)

realistically, there was no economic content in their development programs, that led economic conundrum in these two countries to a continued high inflationary trend to set in for ever, that reflects prevailing way of life. Both countries initiated measures to nationalise heavy industries, financial and banking institutions and public utility systems, during the incipient days, which led to economic genocide, due to launching the experiment, the myth of a socialistic society. Deprivatisation and deregulation are the order of the day to rectify mistakes committed during the initial years. So far, the countries had paid an enormous price for adopting erroneous economic policies, by which people have experienced economic instability. Due to erroneous economic policies adopted in the last fifty years, people continue to suffer from famine, hunger, malnutrition, poverty, deprivation of opportunities, unemployment, insecurity, and terrorism. Therefore, it would be a difficult task to forecast, what is in store for them in the next fifty years. It is hope against hope, to speculate for peace, stability and prosperity at least in the next fifty years, which totally eluded Sri Lanka, but India is believed to be on the right course. □

R Jayawardene also caused resentment on similar lines. Mr Pararajasingham's comments may not have caused a major frenzy in Colombo as in the case of Amirthalingam but the impact of the opinion expressed is not to be treated lightly.

It must also be noted that the views expressed by Mr Pararajasingham are consistent with what he has been constantly articulating at home. The Batticaloa MP has been through speeches in Parliament, correspondence with Government leaders, press releases etc. making out a strong case against the deteriorating human rights situation in the Tamil areas. It has also been reported that he does not share with other TULF leaders an identical perspective on the maintenance of relations with the present Government.

The perceptibly radical stance adopted by Joseph Pararajasingham has contributed to an unfair opinion in some circles that he is a sympathiser of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Attributing ulterior motives to constructive critics is an age old phenomenon in Sri Lankan politics. It is common to both sides of the ethnic divide. The Federal Party and TULF have in earlier times labelled many political opponents as traitors for the "sacrilege" of holding contrary political views. Some criticise the party as having sold out to Chandrika Kumartunga while others accuse persons like Pararajasingham of toeing the LTTE line.

Joseph Pararajasingham's position and role within the TULF assumes greater importance in view of the popular support he enjoys as a politician. It could be said that at present he is the single-most popular mass figure among Tamils. Although immensely popular on the home turf of the Batticaloa district, his popularity extends to other areas also inhabited by Tamils.

The conflict situation saw a number of human rights violations taking place. The most blatant violations being the mass scale disappearance at Vantharumoolai and the massacre of innocents at Kokkatticholai. Joseph Pararajasingham in his systematic manner focused national and international attention on these. He also remained for the greater

part of his time at Batticaloa attending to the needs of his constituents. He was also able to travel in areas dominated by the LTTE to pursue his duties as a people's representative.

The pressure on the people by the activities of the armed forces necessitated the exposing of human rights violations and excesses by Pararajasingham. This in turn irked the Government and pro-Government sections. There was also the peculiar problem of having to cope with LTTE pressures in the region. A problem aggravated by the visible abdication of territory by the army. In recent times incidents such as the killing of Thangathurai has increased the pressure on the TULF.

The aggressive stand by Joseph on the human rights violations of the Government forces coupled with the perception that he is "soft" on the LTTE has placed the man in an unenviable position. Being sensitive to public opinion Joseph realises that the TULF is becoming increasingly unpopular with the Tamil masses over its perceived closeness to the Government. This is what prompts him to stridently advocate an anti-Government position that contrasts sharply with the overall conciliatory attitude of the party towards the Government.

At the same time the different approach adopted by Joseph makes him prone to charges that he is pro-LTTE. The lionising of Pararajasingham by the overseas pro-LTTE media as opposed to the condemnation of the TULF in the same medium only helps to reinforce the suspicion that Joseph, while being IN the TULF, is really OF the LTTE.

A private visit to Canada by Joseph Pararajasingham in mid-August provided this correspondent an opportunity to discuss the current situation at length. Joseph Pararajasingham was frank and forthright in his views that provided a first-hand insight into present day developments in the resplendent Island. The essence of which is summed up in this exclusive article for the "Tamil Times".

Pararajasingham said that his recent visit to the United States had been arranged and organised by some non-Governmental organisations involved in Sri Lankan affairs. During the visit he had met a cross-section of US senators, Congressmen, United Nations Officials, Human Rights Organisation representatives, Church-based humanitarian organisation representatives etc. He said there was nothing clandestine or conspiratorial about these meetings and extensive details had appeared in the Sri Lankan media. Joseph had also met some Sri Lankan Tamil expatriate groups in the USA.

During his meetings with US officials Pararajasingham lodged vehement pro-

tests against the training of Sri Lanka defence personnel by the USA. He had also objected to the supplying of military equipment to Sri Lanka by the USA. This sent out the wrong signals he explained. The Sinhala extremist elements in Sri Lanka were emboldened by this open support displayed by the US. On the other hand the Tamils were disheartened and tended to view the Americans as being hostile to them. The US was in a position to be an effective facilitator in the crisis and bring about a settlement pointed out Joseph. But the current US attitude would compromise its neutrality and render it ineffective said Pararajasingham. This viewpoint given wide publicity in Sri Lanka has ruffled feelings to some extent. Asked whether his visit would contribute to a change in the approach of the US, Joseph replied that it was too early to say but that he was optimistic about a change for the better.

An important point stressed upon by Pararajasingham in his US trip was about the nature of the human rights situation in Sri Lanka. He said that there was a general impression in the west that after Chandrika Kumaratunga assumed office the human rights situation had improved tremendously. The LTTE was now being seen as the sole villain in the piece. Also the previous UNP administration was seen as "bad" and the present administration as "good" on this issue. Joseph Pararajasingham had sought to rectify this erroneous impression.

Elaborating on this point Joseph said that when Kumaratunga was elected to office it was certainly correct that the human rights situation improved tremendously. While this position continued to be so in the seven Sinhala majority provinces for members of the majority community the position for the Tamils had become worse he stated. He also said that in fairness to the UNP the human rights record had changed very much for the better in the last three years of it being in power.

Speaking about the Batticaloa district situation with authority Pararajasingham said that after the war broke out with the LTTE the situation had changed for the worse. Disappearances, arbitrary arrests, unofficial executions, and rapes etc had become quite common. In terms of volume this may be lesser than in the past but in terms of intensity it is much greater said Pararajasingham. He also said that corruption had become a way of life with some military checkpoints making about 20,000 rupees per day in "kappam". This was levied unofficially from vehicles using the main roads.

A disturbing feature in the east as well as the north was the increase in incidents of rape, said Pararajasingham. Only four

incidents had been formally reported in the Batticaloa district but he had reliable information that more than a hundred incidents of rape had occurred there. The fear of social stigma and terror of retaliation at the hands of the armed forces made most people keep quiet about such incidents he said. This may be true in the north too he said. While blatantly horrible incidents such as the Krishanthi Kumaraswamy incident and the Rajini Velauthapillai incident had been publicised many others had not received attention.

Commenting on the Batticaloa district, Pararajasingham said that he did not feel that rape in the district was part of an official policy of terror. It was not an officially sanctioned unofficial instrument of repression, he said. This was more due to the individual misdemeanours of soldiers concerned. The recruitment drive with lowered standards had resulted in people of poor quality being taken into the forces. These men were not very disciplined. Also being confined to camps for a long time under conditions of stress and fear of death may be contributing to abnormal behavioural patterns, said Mr Pararajasingham.

The TULF MP, however had a word of praise for President Chandrika Kumaratunga on this aspect. "Whenever she receives reliable information about rape incidents she promptly takes action. This may be because she is a woman and a mother", said Joseph. Referring to the alleged rape and execution of Mrs Koneswari at the central camp colony, Joseph said that friction had risen because of the illegal chopping of a margosa tree in Koneswari's compound by the policemen. After raping, a grenade had been exploded below her waist. "When I brought details of this incident to the President personally after a Government meeting she was horrified. She got in touch with the Police Chief immediately and ordered action to be taken", said Joseph.

Pararajasingham also provided a dossier of information about the arbitrary arrests and killings. He cited many incidents in detail. When Vavunatheevu Camp was attacked, bodies of innocent Tamils were found in the heart of Batticaloa Town, he said. There was also a case of an 18 year old school boy being arrested in Kalladdy at noon. In the evening he was told that the boy was really a "Tiger" and had tried to fight with a gun and had to be shot. There were enough witnesses about the innocent boy being arrested without any weapons said Joseph. The killing of a mother and daughter belonging to the Burgher County at Irutayapuram in Batticaloa was done for personal reasons he said. A particular policeman responsible for several human rights violations had been promoted, he said.

There were also several instances where the families of arrested persons had been told explicitly not to complain to Joseph Pararajasingham. This was because of common knowledge that he would take up matters like this with the proper authorities. Asked about the element of personal risk Joseph replied that it was always there, however, senior defence officials in the region always appreciated his position even though it caused irritation. "We understand that you have a duty by your people and will have to perform it" several officials had told him directly, he said.

In recent times another problem was surfacing too, said Mr Pararajasingham. There were several ex-militant groups functioning as para-military personnel in the east. They were adopting the nefarious practice of forcibly conscripting youths from the area, shaving their heads, providing rudimentary arms training and then sending them to the warfront in the Vanni said Mr Pararajasingham. He also showed several letters written by parents, educationists, and religious leaders bearing out this development to this correspondent.

Mr Pararajasingham said that the situation in Jaffna was also bad in terms of disappearances. More than seven hundred had disappeared in the past year, he said. He himself had received reliable documentary evidence of 207 northern disappearances said Mr Joseph Pararajasingham. He had followed these up with prompt action, he said.

In addition he said that Tamils in the southern areas particularly in Colombo and the suburbs were being harassed too. There were arbitrary arrests and unjustified detentions. There was also the case of floating Tamil bodies in Colombo and the suburbs in 1995.

Referring in detail to this, Mr Pararajasingham said that the human rights task force had named four persons as being guilty of the mass disappearance in Vantharumoolai in 1990. One of those concerned was named as "Major Munas". The same person was behind the murders of Tamil youths in Colombo too. Although arrests of these people had been conducted, subsequent action by the authorities are quite suspect. Neither the CID nor the AG's Department had been present on several dates when the case had been taken up. The trial could not proceed by the act of omission by the authorities. As a result the arrested persons had been released and were allegedly in service again. This was tantamount to the sanctioning of these human rights offences charged Mr Pararajasingham.

Apart from spotlighting the abysmal human rights record of the present Government Mr Pararajasingham said that he



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had also set the record straight about the resolution of the ethnic problem. As in the case of human rights there was also a view abroad that the present Government was about to resolve the problem through its two pronged approach. It was also felt that it was the LTTE which was standing in the way. Mr Pararajasingham said that he had sought to change this mindset or perception by outlining the exact political situation now prevailing.

Mr Pararajasingham categorically said that the Government's dual strategy of militarily weakening the LTTE and politically introducing a devolution scheme had failed. He said that the Government's attempt to open the Jaffna-Vavuniya land route had hit snags and was unlikely to succeed. He said that the LTTE unlike in earlier times was in possession of long-range artillery and was using it liberally to counter the military advance. They were also allowing the troops to advance and then infiltrating enemy lines and counter attacking from the rear. The LTTE was not merely a guerrilla organisation but a fully-fledged militia, he said.

On the other hand the State was also finding it difficult to consolidate and safeguard the territory captured because of manpower shortage said Mr Pararajasingham. The recruitment campaigns were not successful despite lowering eligibility requirements. The amnesty offered to the deserters was also not successful. The only other options are to introduce compulsory military duty or bring in foreign troops if possible. Both these moves would be politically damaging so the Government would not undertake them, he said.

If the military situation was a stalemate the political situation was gloomy too, he said. Apart from President Kumaratunga and cabinet ministers G L Peiris and Mangala Samaraweera no other important PA leader was pushing for the devolution package, he said. Some were even opposed to it but were keeping quiet for now. If certain entrenched clauses were not amended genuine devolution amounting to federalism would not be possible but to do so UNP support was necessary. A two-thirds majority in Parliament and victory at a referendum was necessary. To get this a PA-UNP consensus was necessary. But thanks to petty politicking on both sides UNP support does not seem to be forthcoming. As such success on the ethnic political front too seems impossible, explained Mr Pararajasingham.

Continuing further Mr Pararajasingham stated that his party the TULF too would review the support extended by it to the Government in October this year. He said that the TULF was extending support from the opposition ranks. The pro-

posals presented by the Government in 1995 provided for federalism through changing the unitary character of the State. It also allowed control of land to the regional councils. This is in keeping with the principles enunciated by our revered leader S J V Chelvanayakam, said Mr Pararajasingham.

The amended proposals presented in 1996 however were not in keeping with the original proposals. There seems to be some backtracking on things like the unitary state and lands etc. If that is the final position of the Government then the TULF cannot support it. We are waiting for the final outcome in October before making our move. If the Government defaults then we will totally withdraw our support and function against it like an opposition party instead of as at present, he said.

Continuing further Mr Joseph said "Already the pursuit of the war has caused hardship to the people. To register our protest we called for a division at the extension of emergency debate and voted against. By this we showed our displeasure and also proved to the Tamil people that this Government was not being propped up by the TULF but other Tamil parties. It is always the TULF which gets blamed for the sins of the Government although other Tamil parties are also supporting it. It may be because though we have five seats only we are the most respected and credible party in the eyes of the world. If that is the case our possible withdrawal of support to the Government in October will affect the Government's credibility".

Asked whether the TULF would really adopt this line definitely in October, Mr Pararajasingham said "definitely so". He said that the majority of the TULF Parliamentarians as well as the working committee would support his position if it came to a test.

Questioned as to whether there was a major division of opinion in the party on the issue Mr Pararajasingham replied "As in the case of any democratic party there are different shades of opinion but after discussion and debate the majority will prevail within. All of us would adhere to this principle. Reports of major divisions within the TULF are greatly exaggerated by the media".

On the question of conflicting perception within the TULF on its relationship with the PA Government, Mr Pararajasingham explained thus. Some members in the party have the fullest confidence in Chandrika Kumaratunga and her genuine intentions. I too subscribe to that view. There is no doubt that she is a very sincere person and genuinely wants to provide a just and fair settlement to the Tamil problem. As such she deserves our whole-hearted support. We should refrain

from embarrassing her politically as far as possible.

Continuing further Mr Pararajasingham said that the problem here was the on-going war. This has changed and continues to change the situation. The Tamil people are suffering as a result of it. There are many human rights violations. It is our duty as the representatives of the Tamil people to highlight those violations. We must also speak out against the war. If in that process the credibility of the Government gets damaged then it cannot be helped.

At the same time the TULF cannot continue to support the Government conducting a war without being politically damaged. In 1994 the main expectation of the people who voted for us was that we would prevail upon the Government and the LTTE and bring about a peaceful solution. They expected us to use our influence and gain a lot of rights for the community.

The on-going war however is affecting all that. By our association with this Government we are losing credibility in the eyes of the Tamil people. If this situation continues then we would be undermined further, I can realise that the mood of the people is changing because I spend eight to ten months in my electorate. Some others in our party are not fully conversant with this reality as they are more or less confined to Colombo and Madras.

Also they genuinely trust Chandrika and feel that she will deliver the goods, continued Joseph Pararajasingham. "This does not mean that we should continue to give her unconditional support while we as a party are losing credibility in the eyes of our people. There is also the political reality of the situation. With all her good intentions she may find it politically impossible to resolve the Tamil problem peacefully and satisfactorily. In that case what happens? After the problems being faced by the Tamil people as a result of the war if there is a default in the political settlement then there would be a severe Tamil backlash. The TULF will suffer as a result and be dragged down. I don't want that to happen."

Mr Pararajasingham also said that support extended to Chandrika should not mean involvement unnecessarily in Southern Politics. Asked specifically he said that the leadership had issued a statement without his knowledge asking the Tamils to support the PA in the local polls. This was a mistake because the TULF which is trying to bring about a bipartisan consensus between the PA and the UNP should remain neutral in Southern political matters. This statement had not only alienated the UNP but also exposed the TULF weakness in Colombo as

Tamils had voted for the UNP. He declined to comment further on inner party divisions.

Mr Pararajasingham's clarification was sought about the popular perception that he was an LTTE sympathiser, a view that is being reinforced by the LTTE Overseas Media. Journals attacking the TULF as committing "Parliamentary prostitution" refer to Mr Pararajasingham in a different tone. Interviews are published and broadcast in media outlets controlled by the LTTE. The impression sought to be projected is that Mr Pararajasingham is a different kettle of fish as opposed to the "Evil" TULF.

Mr Pararajasingham replied that he was not aware of the overseas situation. When Tamil radios and newspapers overseas asked him for interviews, he responded positively without going into the political background of such media. Likewise he also addressed Tamil organisations and groups of Tamil individuals without delving into their political beliefs. Some of these may have been pro-LTTE but he was not aware of it, he said. He also said that both pro-LTTE as well as anti-LTTE elements would like to brand him as an "LTTE man" for different motives, he said.

Referring to his position about the LTTE Mr Pararajasingham said that he entered politics as a follower of the Gandhian Chelvanayakam. He had always remained with the party through fair and foul weather. He would always remain one and there was no question of him joining or supporting any other party.

Amplifying further Mr Pararajasingham said that he defined his role as an elected representative of the people in very simplistic terms. He was there to serve the people and articulate their grievances. In a war situation the primary problem of the people was facing violence and human rights violations. As such he was spotlighting the human rights violations perpetrated by the armed forces. This may embarrass the Government and in an indirect sense help LTTE propaganda but he had no hidden agenda. His concern was only to highlight these violations without fear of consequences in the hope that publicity would act as a deterrent to further excesses.

When asked as to why LTTE offences are not referred to by him on the same scale, Mr Pararajasingham replied thus. "In Batticaloa District seven of the twelve AGA divisions are fully dominated by the LTTE. In the others the armed forces are in control of the urban centres and main roads. Even here it is only by day. It is the opposite of the old Tamil film song "Iravinil Aattam Pagaliniil Thookkam". Here the armed forces are active by day and dormant by night. The Tigers are masters of

the night. Recently a Batticaloa Municipal Councillor was attacked and killed by enemies in the heart of the town. No security authority ventured out to help him. The attack was motivated by personal reasons. But even if the LTTE had done so nothing would have happened.

"I am in touch with people living in army controlled as well as LTTE controlled areas. The people coming from the LTTE controlled areas do not make any complaints about the Tigers to me. There is some grumbling about money being collected but even that is mild. These people are more concerned by the death and destruction caused by incessant shelling of their villages by the army merely because the LTTE is dominant there.

"On the other hand it is the people living in the army-dominated areas who complain to me about rapes, arrests, disappearances and other human rights violations etc. So as a people's representative I have to reflect them. I should not be blamed if this tends to project a different picture. The truth is that the LTTE does not exert any kind of pressure direct or indirect on me."

Asked about who was responsible for his colleague Thangathurai's assassination Mr Pararajasingham said that there were too many confusing details and it was therefore difficult to pinpoint anyone or any group specifically. The SLBC that had asked him about the personal data of Thangathurai had mischievously reported that he (Mr Pararajasingham) had condemned the Tigers for the killing. He had to rush with a statement contradicting it, he said.

Asked to sum up the political situation in Sri Lanka Mr Pararajasingham said that the government plan to bring about a settlement without the LTTE had failed. The reality was that the LTTE was controlling 70% of the land and 85% of the coast in the North and East. Continuing the unwinnable war would only harm the ordinary Tamil people. As such the only way out would be for the Government to declare a ceasefire and negotiate with the LTTE. By saying so he was not holding a brief for the LTTE but merely stating the obvious facts.

Asked again whether the LTTE will negotiate genuinely Mr Pararajasingham said that he could not speak for the Tigers but merely saying that the reality was that no solution was possible without the LTTE. Emphasising that no solution was possible without the LTTE did not warrant his being asked about the bona fides or otherwise of the Tigers. His position was that the LTTE was a must for a settlement. Whether the LTTE would participate in such a process or not was not for him to answer.

Mr Pararajasingham, however, re-

peated an opinion he had expressed to a gathering of Tamils in the USA. He said that although the war against the LTTE was unwinnable the Tamil people were suffering greatly. They were being marginalised greatly and would lose out in the long run. He was sure that the LTTE too would realise this and engage in negotiations if it feels they are genuine. To inculcate the LTTE with that type of confidence international facilitation and possible mediation was necessary. It was up to the overseas Tamil lobby to try and create such conditions. He had found that there was a deficiency in overseas Tamil lobbying and that the Tamil point of view had not been put across effectively.

When this correspondent went to meet Mr Pararajasingham after a gap of nearly three years, he too was somewhat concerned by the seeming tilt of the Parliamentarian towards the LTTE. A detailed discussion with him and Mrs Sugunam Pararajasingham left this correspondent with a somewhat different perspective. One was able to appreciate the situation from the particular perspective of Mr Pararajasingham.

Recently his Parliamentary colleague from Batticaloa Thurairajalingam was asked to resign for an innocent comment made to the BBC. It was interpreted as anti-LTTE. It is in this kind of environment that Joseph Pararajasingham exists and functions. His systematic exposure of the human rights violations by the State and its organs has earned for him great respect and regard. It is certain that if he were to extend that scope to an intra-Tamil perspective his stature would increase.

At the same time attempting to do so may even result in the "silencing" of whatever he is doing now. If that happens even the good that he is doing now may end forever. It would be unrealistic and even unfair to pass value judgement on a man coping despite his limits with a trying situation. An ordinary man facing an extraordinary crisis.

Above all he is a man living in the arena of conflict and was therefore susceptible to all the horrors and terrors of the situation. Compromises and adjustments that may seem abhorrent from a distance may not be that "abominable" when one takes the concept of "pragmatism" into account. One thing that came across transparently clear was Pararajasingham's definite commitment to the well-being of his people.

A remark made by his wife summed up for this correspondent the predicament faced by Mr Pararajasingham. Mrs Pararajasingham lamented at one stage, "what a time for him to have entered Parliament! What a lot of problems there are now!! How difficult to function as a member of Parliament!!!

JAFFNA: A VISION SKEWED

[Text of Special Report No 9 dated 7 June 1997
by the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna)]

(Continued from last issue)

4. Killings by the LTTE

5th January 1997: G.W.Piyadasa(65), a Sinhalese who had been resident in Jaffna for 40 years was shot dead by the LTTE near Innuvil junction. He was accused of having contact with the army and giving information. The LTTE notice further asked people not to have contact with the army whether willingly or unwillingly. With long experience Piyadasa was no doubt a careful man. During the 80s in particular, a number of individuals, Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim, were killed on the slenderest accusation of giving information. In the present climate of a large number of people giving information, even an innocent conversation by Piyadasa with soldiers who had moved into that area would have been given an adverse interpretation. For example, in the case of the killing of two key LTTE leaders in Thavady which is close to Innuvil, 1½ months later, the army had been able to obtain accurate information without the help of any Sinhalese around.

Kokkuvil, Manjavannapathy: 6th January: A man about 50 years old was found shot dead. The local talk was that he had been 'punished' by the LTTE 17th January: Uthayakumar, a merchant, was shot dead by the LTTE who claimed responsibility saying that he was an informer.

Point Pedro: 18th January: Krishnakumar(48) of Valvettithurai was attached to the security division of the Point Pedro CTB Depot and was a widower. His deceased wife Indra had been the daughter of **Mr.Kandasamy**, Emeritus Principal of Palaly Teachers' Training College. He lived alone with his mother and was fond of dogs, of whom he kept several. As has often been found characteristic of several critics of the LTTE of Valvettithurai origin (same as the Leader), he was very frank and open about his criticism of

the LTTE. This had obviously been reported to the LTTE a long time ago. The fact that he was an outsider and the fear of associating with someone openly critical of the LTTE, rendered Krishnakumar somewhat isolated.

While the LTTE controlled Jaffna peninsula, it had used its middle class supporters to spy and inform on others of similar social status. For example, a retired gentleman in Point Pedro used to be visited after dark by two men from the LTTE Intelligence Unit riding a motorcycle. He was periodically given instructions to spy on particular persons. During 1993 this gentleman told some of his close associates that the LTTE would soon place Krishnakumar under detention. But this had not happened. Nothing happened until recently.

On the day concerned an army patrol passed his house in V.M. Road near Vada-Hindu Girls' School and the dogs barked. It was 6.50 p.m.(old time) and almost dark. A little later the dogs barked again. Krishnakumar went out to look and five shots were heard. His mother then came out and found him dead. Though it was curfew time the mother carried a lantern and walked 1½ miles to Manthikai hospital to obtain help. The army came at 3:00 a.m. the next morning and took away the body in an ambulance. The body was brought to the house after the inquest. The event sent shock waves of terror among the people of Point Pedro. Hardly anyone attended the funeral besides Krishnakumar's brother Jeyakumar and his wife

- the only ones to stand by the mother. Krishnakumar had no children.

It was later reportedly claimed by the LTTE that Krishnakumar had worked for the Army Intelligence Unit. This is strenuously denied by all those who knew him well. Such an occupation is not undertaken by those who are openly critical of the LTTE. This is one of those periodic actions by the LTTE to keep the people reminded that they would come back "to wipe away their tears".

Point Pedro: 25th January: S.T.R.Jeyakumar was killed by the LTTE in exactly the same manner on a Saturday at the same time, exactly a week after Krishnakumar was killed. **Jeyakumar** was a photographer in Point Pedro with two children and had gone to live in Vavuniya during the war. Following the army taking over Vadammaratchy in April 1996, Jeyakumar brought his family back to Point Pedro and resumed his trade of taking videos and photographs at functions. On the day concerned someone came to his house, called him out and said that he had come to collect some photographs. When Jeyakumar did not recognise the man, the caller asked him to look at his face and then opened fire. The **Uthayan** report indicated a claim that he had been an informant to the Army. There was also local gossip to the effect that he had links with other militant groups who had just begun setting up offices in Jaffna. All this was mere speculation. Again those who knew him well averred that he had no links with the security forces. Jeyakumar's funeral was well attended as he was a man of the area and his children counted many playmates. Those in the locality are unaware of any LTTE claim.

Polikandy (Vadammaratchy): 30th January 1997: S.Shanmugam was executed by the LTTE. He is said to have been fluent in Sinhalese. There have been several other reports of killings by the LTTE of which we do not have the details. The **Uthayan** of 25/12/96 quoted an Army spokesman as saying that the LTTE killed

a 65 year old woman in Point Pedro.

Manipay: 6th February 1997: Y.Srinivasan(48) was killed by the LTTE. The charges against him in a notice beside the body were reported in the **Uthayan**. He is said to have betrayed supporters of the LTTE and provided information to the army about an LTTE camp and hid-

The University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) (UTHR(J)) was formed in 1988 at the University of Jaffna, as part of the national organisation University Teachers for Human Rights. Its public activities as a constituent part of university life came to a standstill following the murder of Dr. Rajani Thiraganama, a key founding member, on 21st September 1989. During the course of 1990 the others who identified openly with the UTHR(J) were forced to leave Jaffna. It continues to function as an organisation upholding the founding spirit of the UTHR(J) with its original aims:

To challenge the external and internal terror engulfing the Tamil community as a whole through making the perpetrators accountable, and to create space for humanising the social & political spheres relating to the life of our community. The UTHR(J) is not at present functioning in the University of Jaffna in the manner it did in its early life for reasons well understood. The work of UTHR(J) receives support from the European Human Rights Foundation among others.



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den equipment. He is also said to have betrayed a planned ambush in Sithankerny resulting in the army recovering a claymore mine. The LTTE further asked others who had fallen for "charmed words and privileges" to give up such activities.

Nunavil: 8th April 1997: Chelliah Padaiveerasingham was called out from his house near the junction at 7.30 p.m. by someone standing at the gate. A shot was heard a little later. His body was found the next morning a short distance away. There was a board saying that he had been punished. The EPDP said (*Uthayan* 10/4/97) that he had been killed by the LTTE. Other sources in the area said that **Padaiveerasingham** lived in a neighbourhood from which a number of persons had joined the EPRLF, but that he was an innocent man having no contact with the army. This contention is further strengthened by the fact that this killing had left many people in the area puzzled. There was no local knowledge or rumour to suggest that he had any links with either the Army or the LTTE. People simply reasoned that the LTTE did not appear to have been responsible because it issues a warning or two before killing someone. But we have a number of cases of LTTE killings on record where no warning was given, and the LTTE denied responsibility. Some people in the area drew the conclusion that the killing had been done by Tamil groups who had recently come to Jaffna. The modus operandi however is the one used by the LTTE and there are no indications that the other Tamil groups who had been in Jaffna now for four months have indulged in such activities. Yet some of the recent killings by the LTTE may have to do with driving fear into persons who may have family or other connections with the Tamil parties now in Jaffna.

Imayaman Kovilady, Vadamaratchy : Mid May : Tharmalingam Saimini, a young woman of 22 years, was shot dead by the LTTE. Her 'crime' was that she was engaged to a member of the Sri Lankan army. It is said that the LTTE had issued 3 warnings. The funeral arrangements were undertaken by the Army.

Sarasalai, Thenmaratchy : 23rd May : Arumauam Kumarasooriyar (42), a trader, also known as Suresh, was taken from his home by the LTTE during the night. His dead body was discovered near Kamalasin School, Mattuvil, the following morning. The charge against him is reportedly that he had retained goods that were shipped into Jaffna and supplied by the Army. Some sections of the army are involved in trade on the side, even run-

ning some well-patronised canteens.

5. Civilians Affected Directly by LTTE Attacks

Chavkacheri, Chankatthanai: 19th January: LTTE cadre threw a grenade at soldiers manning a temporary road-block and ran away. A school boy, **Paramanathan Parthipan (15)** and some other civilians suffered injuries.

Ponnalai : 29th January : See 3 above and last section of Addendum on JTH.

Chankanai East : 19th February: According to a statement by the Army reported in the 'Uthayan' and not contradicted, a claymore mine exploded in Chankanai East at 7.30 AM on 19th February 1997, and a grenade was thrown, resulting in 5 civilians being injured and a 10 years old girl who was badly hurt being taken to Palaly base for treatment.

Thalayady, Maruthankerni: 15th March: Passenger bus no 62-4774 plying route No 807 at 6.15 a.m. was blasted by an LTTE land-mine. It is speculated that those exploding the mine had thought that the bus was carrying soldiers. But only regular passengers were in the bus. A woman, **Pathmavathy(30)**, of Maruthankerny and a man, **Kandiah (65)** of Udutthurai, were killed. 11 others were injured.

Thinnevely : mid-April : LTTE cadre threw grenades at soldiers between the University of Jaffna and the post office. Those injured were 3 women and a man who were 2nd year commerce students of the University :- **P.Jeyarani (24)**, **S.Priya (23)**, **N. Pushparani (25) & C.Easan (23)**.

Ilvalalai, Valikamam North: 3rd June: An Army escorted bus was subject to a land mine attack, killing a policeman, two soldiers and two civilians. The injured civilians were taken to JTH.

6. A Note on Military Operations

Despite a disturbing trend, reprisals remain the exception rather than the rule. In Vadamaratchy discipline remains good. As an example, Irumpumathavady in Navindil is an area frequented by the LTTE. Recently soldiers acting on information ambushed and killed two or three LTTE cadre. About a week later the LTTE shot and killed two soldiers on a motorcycle near the local army camp. Within an hour the situation was normal and people were going past the army camp without fear.

LTTE attacks on the Army mainly rely on hand grenades and claymore mines and are thus principally aimed at un-nerving and provoking reprisals. The LTTE operates in larger numbers in the south-

eastern sector of Thenmaratchy where direct confrontations sometimes take place. The LTTE admitted losing 4 men in a confrontation at Vettilaikerni in early May. About 2.30 A.M. on 4th May the LTTE attacked the Army camp at Thanankilappu and withdrew after half an hour leaving two dead. The Army too seems to have suffered casualties as suggested by a report in the 'Uthayan', that two helicopter landings in the army camp were sighted. 13 soldiers were killed in an LTTE attack in Vettilaikerni just before independence day (4th February). On 17th April 10 soldiers and two civilians travelling with them were killed in a mine blast in Vadamaratchy East (uncleared). Their vehicle was one in a convoy going on a mission. Following a round up using masked informants, three persons from the same family in Nagar Kovil (**Ariaratnam Selvakumar (23)**, **Ariaratnam Arulmathy (21)**, & **Periyathamby Amalanthan (31)**) were taken away.

On the 6th December 1996, 6 soldiers having their usual bath at a well 75 yards from the Meesalai camp in Thenmaratchy were killed when two claymore mines operated by a pressure switch exploded. Overall, troop casualties appear to have declined in comparison with last year, and the levels are far below the high casualty rate in the East. The distinction between cleared and uncleared areas remains. Often Special Forces mounted on motorcycles operate in uncleared areas.

Reports of LTTE casualties could be gleaned from the 'Uthayan'. These are often coded ambiguously as 'bodies of unidentified youth'. One often reads that the Police from Chavakacheri (in case of Thenmaratchy) or Chunnakam (in the case of Valikamam) brought the bodies of unidentified youth to Jaffna Hospital for identification and post-mortem examination. This usually means that no relative had so far come forward to make an identification.

For example, the 'Uthayan' of 18-02-97 reported that the Chavakacheri Police brought 8 bodies to Jaffna Hospital over the past 3 days, 5 from 3 separate incidents. 3 unidentified bodies from an incident in Palai on the dawn of 15/2 were brought to Jaffna Hospital on the 17th evening. All three had gunshot injuries, one had the chest and two hands smashed. The bodies of **Nadaraja Prabakaran(21)** and **Yogeswara-sarma(22)** killed on Sunday (16th) during the shooting incidents in Mattuvil - Point Pedro Road and Navatkadu, Varani, respectively, were brought to Jaffna Hospital in the evening, the same day. Their names were given by the Police, but where they are from is not known."

There is, taking into account the circumstances given and not given, little

cause for doubt in the case of the first three. In the case of the last two they may have possessed some form identification or may have been known in the area. But for more than 24 hours, no one had come forward to claim the bodies. Based on this, the element of doubt is however greater. We have given a case above (24/2) where in the case of an innocent civilian killed, the family had come to Jaffna Hospital for the body, but the Police refused saying that he was LTTE.

Other typical reports are : (Uthayan 19/1/97): The body of a youth with gun shot injuries was seen on Eluthumattuval - Nagarcovil road in the morning, the day before yesterday. No further details were received of this corpse clad in black trousers and a green banian.

(Same issue of Uthayan) : The corpse of a youth about 20 years, said to have been shot dead in Chankanai, 9:50 a.m., day before yesterday, was brought by the Chunnakam Police the same day. There were gunshot injuries in the left side of the chest and in the neck. His name was given as **Jegan**. (Uthayan 27/2): The body of a youth said to have been killed in the incident in Kokkuvil West day-before-yesterday, was brought to Jaffna Hospital yesterday by the Chunnakam Police. It was made known that the deceased was a member of the LTTE.

(The latter incident appears to have been in the context of the operation in which two key members of the LTTE were killed the previous day in the same area-report above)

(Uthayan 30/3): The body of an unidentified youth, about 29 years of age, said to have been killed in the shooting incident at about 4:30p.m. in the Kondavil area day before yesterday, was brought to Jaffna Hospital by the Jaffna Police yesterday for identification and inquest proceedings. The corpse had gunshot injuries in the back of the left shoulder and the upper right hand.

7. Vadamaratchy

We once more highlight Vadamaratchy as an area where the conduct of the army has been exemplary. Missing persons have been very few and we know of only one case in Irumbumathavady where arrest is being denied, which remains to be clarified. Sadly much of this owes to the initiative of **Colonel Larry Wijeratne**, the brigade commander, rather than to the army as an institution. In dealing with the people he tries to understand them and remove causes for offence. On the vexed question of persons having to dismount at check points and walk past soldiers he has now made it the routine that people need not dismount from their vehicles. In cases of persons

who were victims of army action he has visited their homes and tried to reassure their families. In the case of **Muralitharan** (Bulletin No.13) who died under torture by the army, the Colonel visited the home, carried the baby and made his personal apologies to the wife. In places where soldiers had tended to misbehave, in order not to expose the complainants he had visited homes in the area, which served as a warning to the soldiers. As a result he has also been successful in forming a number of societies and even those of youth, where issues could be discussed.

One of the successes was to arrange for 92 students (two from every GS division) to visit the South where they were given opportunities to meet those of their age in the South and also visit places of interest. This went ahead despite warning letters to the headmen (GSs) from the LTTE. Applications for travel to Colombo need to go through the brigade HQ and in following the normal routine there is a long wait. Owing to the shortage of teachers the Colonel had politely told teachers who gave him their applications to travel to Colombo, that rather than wait their turn in the queue, if they would go during the vacation he would see to it that they would travel as soon as their school broke and could then return in time for the reopening.

In principle every civilian has access to the brigade commander. Normally the civilians would first go to the civil affairs officer and if he could not help them in the way they wanted, they could see the brigade commander if they were prepared to wait. More recently the Colonel has been visiting places and homes informally in civilian dress.

Recently the Colonel had been invited as the guest of honour at the prize givings at **Hartley College** and **Methodist Girls' School, Pt. Pedro**. His speeches were much appreciated. The Manila based **Radio Veritas** claimed in its Tamil broadcast that the Colonel has been forcing himself on schools and has also forced schools to fly the national (Sri Lankan) flag at their functions. Both these charges are denied locally. The invitations were spontaneous. The Colonel had in fact told the school principals that they are not under any compulsion to fly the national flag.

It is also the first time after 1978 (at **St. Patrick's**) where a Sinhalese had been so honoured at a prize-giving in Jaffna. The people are mainly looking for decency and humanity. We are also given a strong hint of the wasteful and destructive nature of government and military policy over the past decades, as opposed to what could have been achieved by an appeal to reason and humanity.

8. The Long Road to Dignity and Democratic Accountability

8.1 The People

Experience, that has been long and tragic, ought to have taught us that it is the willingness of people at all levels of society to stand up and speak their minds fearlessly that would ensure its health and well-being.

It is heartening to note that **Jaffna** is doing better than what might have been expected in the light of what happened during the past 11 years. The Roman Catholic Church has been the largest organised body in Jaffna, but it had almost totally failed to take up a moral position during the long years of internecine strife and internal oppression when blood flowed freely. The opportunism and culpability of some clergy is also well-known. In recent times however it is a most encouraging sign that **Bishop Thomas Saundaranayagam** is rising up to the occasion and saying things that need to be said by a leader of his standing. In a number of interviews he has given the press and visiting delegations, his remarks have been wide-ranging. He has criticised the Government over its shortcomings and the needless disabilities suffered by the people. But he has also done the difficult things like giving credit to the Government and the Army where credit is due. He has also been self-critical. Commenting on the lack of democratic initiative within the Tamil community, he has said, "For seven years we have been silent. We need once more to teach ourselves how to speak". Tamil readers in Jaffna have however not been given the benefit of what he has been saying. The Tamil press has generally avoided publishing remarks which challenge the nationalist position.

There have also been letters to the editor of the **Uthayan** protesting against arbitrary arrest and corruption. What follows is an excerpt from a letter to the editor of the **Athena** (6th January 1997). It is a carefully drafted letter, a good deal of which is double edged, and is capped by the irony of the editor's note: "...It has been pointed out in the press that the people returned to Valikamam placing their faith in the armed forces. Arrests and disappearances resulting from the activities of the armed forces have created a situation where the gap between them and the people could only increase. I trust that my writing this will not be taken as an action against the forces resulting in harm being done to me. Yet it is being widely talked about that we came trusting the armed forces and that we have been taken for a ride. Therefore I trust and plead that the armed forces would treat this as a problem of those who placed their trust on them and will

take remedial action accordingly.

"Even in recent times many persons have been arrested by both the Tigers and the armed forces. But no information about these arrests is published in the press. This has caused many readers of the Uthayan (the only paper in Jaffna) to wonder if it is being subject to censorship through clandestine means..."

Editor's note: "In consideration of the safety of this reader from Anaikkottai, we have decided to withhold his name."

8.2 Tamil Political Parties in Jaffna

>From January four former militant groups, the EPDP, EPRLF, TELO & PLOTE are represented in Jaffna as political parties. The EPRLF had largely ceased to function as a militant group since 1990. There had been misgivings about their deployment in Jaffna owing to a negative view of the activities of some groups that had worked closely with the armed forces. For example, in our recent report on the Vanni, we highlighted some of the activities of the PLOTE and TELO in Vavuniya. Manikkathasan, who is the deputy leader of the PLOTE, has been personally associated with a number of uninvestigated killings even under the present government. Under the terms in which these groups were to set up office in Jaffna, they could maintain rifles in their offices and certain leaders were allowed to carry pistols for their protection while moving around. So far the earlier fears have not materialised and these groups are so far known to be playing only a political role in the peninsula proper (i.e. excluding the Islands where the EPDP had long maintained an armed presence).

Up to this time there have been no major complaints although doubts remain. At least people who need help with someone arrested, want to go to Colombo urgently, wish to make a telephone call to Colombo, wish to find a job or talk about some other problem, feel that they could approach someone who might do something. These groups have also been exerting pressure regarding missing persons and have been pressing for inquiries in the case of persons killed by army action.

There would always be the nagging fear that some elements from these groups who are very much beholden to individual army officers rather than to anyone else, may, if things become difficult, be used in the manner in which they have been used in Vavuniya and the Eastern Province. The LTTE no doubt hopes that such an eventuality would arise. If such pitfalls are avoided, this may be an opportunity for these groups to redeem themselves. The TULF has been criticised for not coming to Jaffna and according to a TULF spokesman, they are seriously thinking of moving in.

(Continued in next issue)

PARTITION OF INDIA A TRAGEDY AND A CRIME

Tariq Ali

In these bad times when the fashion is to worship accomplished facts, real history tends to be treated as an irritant, something to be swatted out of existence like mosquitoes in summer. It is worth recalling that something terrible happened 50 years ago today when India was divided. It is time to recognise it and see if it can be understood and transcended. The survivors owe it to those who perished.

Two million men, women and children lost their lives during the carnage of "ethnic cleansing" that overcame northern and eastern India as the Punjab and Bengal were divided along religious lines. In the mouths that preceded partition. Hindus and Sikhs on one side and Muslims on the other glared into each other's hate-filled eyes before embarking on frenzied bloodbaths. The character and scale of the butchery was unprecedented in Indian history.

Trains became moving graveyards as they arrived at stations on both sides of the new divide, packed with corpses of fleeing refugees. As always, it was the poor of town and country who were the main victims, and they were hurled or burnt in hastily dug pits. Neither the song of the nightingale nor lamps or flowers would ever grace their graves. They are the forgotten victims of that year. No memorial in India or Pakistan marks the killings. They are unlikely to be mentioned during the celebrations commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Independence or its insipid reflection on British television screens.

The partition of India was a tragedy and a crime. It was neither inevitable nor necessary and its traces are only too visible in the unending anguish of the great sub-continent. Even as I write, Sunni and Shia Muslims are killing each other at the rate of 10 deaths a day in Pakistan. Faiz Ahmed Faiz, one of the greatest of 20th century Urdu poets, born in what became Pakistan, spoke for many in his poem Freedom's Dawn, in August 1947:

This leprous daybreak, down night's fangs have
mangled
This is not that long-looked for break of day
Not that clear dawn in quest of which those
comrades
Set out, believing that in heaven's wide void

Somewhere must be the star's last halting place
Somewhere the verge of night's slow-washing tide
Somewhere on anchorage for the ships of
heartache.

But now, word goes, the birth of day, from
darkness
Is finished, wandering feet stand at their goal
Our leaders' ways are altering, festive looks
Are all the fashion, discontent reproved
And yet this physic still on unslaked eye
Or heart fevered by severance works no cure
Where did that fine breeze, that the wayside lamps
Has not once felt blow from - where has it fled
Night's heaviness is unlesened still the hour
Of mind and spirit's ransom has not struck
Let us go on, our goal is not reached yet.

Saadat Hasan Manto, one of the most gifted short-story writers produced by the sub-continent, was moved to write Toba Tek Singh. His story inset in the lunatic asylum in Lahore at the time of partition. When whole cities are being ethnically cleansed, how can the asylums escape? The Hindu and Sikh lunatics are told by bureaucrats organising the transfer of power that they will be forcibly transferred to institutions in India. The inmates rebel. They embrace each other and weep. They will not be parted willingly. They have to be forced on to the trucks. One of them, a Sikh, is so overcome by rage that he dies on the demarcation line which divides Pakistan from India. Confronted by so much insanity in the real world. Manto could only find normality in the asylum. The "lunatics" have a better understanding of the crime that is being perpetrated than the politicians who have agreed to partition.

Few politicians on either side foresaw the results. Jawaharlal Nehru's romantic nationalism portrayed independence as a long-delayed "tryst with destiny", but he never imagined that the tryst would be bathed in so much Indian blood. This was partially the result of a failure by the Congress High Command to make the large Muslim minority an offer it could not refuse.

Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, was a second-rate politician, but with a first-class lawyer's brain. Initially he had used separatism as a bargaining ploy. Even later, he genuinely believed that the new state would simply be a smaller

version of secular India, with one difference. Here Muslims would be the largest community. He really believed that he would still be able to spend some time every winter at his mansion in Bombay, the only city where he had found love.

Jinnah conceived of Pakistan, as an amalgamation of an undivided Punjab, an undivided Bengal together with Sind, Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province. This would have meant that 40 per cent of the Punjab would have consisted of Hindus and Sikhs and 49 per cent of Bengal would have consisted of Hindus. It was a utopian nonsense. Once confessional passions had been aroused and neighbours were massacring each other (as in Bosnia a few years ago) it was difficult to keep the two provinces united. "I do not care how little you give me," Jinnah is reported as saying in March 1947 to the last Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, "as long as you give it to me completely."

He was a dying old man in a hurry, who could have been easily outmanoeuvred had the Congress been capable of some strategic insights, but now he wanted his own state-let, however small and awkward it might appear on the map.

India had come a long way in 1947. All previous rulers had attempted to govern with the consent of the ruling elites of whatever religion. The Mughal Emperors, themselves Muslims, had learnt this lesson very quickly and Akbar had unsuccessfully attempted to create a new religion synthesising Hinduism and Islam. Even the last of the great Mughals, the religious-minded Aurungzeb, did not attempt any Islamicisation of his army, his ablest generals were Hindu chiefs!

The British when confronted with the nightmare of actually governing India, realised that, despite their more advanced technology, they would not last too long without serious alliances. They could only govern India with the consent of its traditional rulers. The raj was maintained by a very tiny British presence in 1895, the pink-cheeked conquerors numbered 31,000; in 1911 they had grown to 164,000 and in 1931 these were 168,000. In other words the British in India never comprised more than 0.05 per cent of the local population.

It was this fact that concentrated the finest minds of the raj on politics and strategy. The civil servants trained by Haileybury and other imperialist nurseries in Britain to govern a mighty sub-continent were political administrators, often of the highest order. They learned to speak Urdu and Bengali so that they could, when necessary, communicate directly with peasants and administer justice. They also learned how to divide local rulers from each other and how to fan religious preju-

ices. The birth of modern Sikhism and Hinduism owes a great deal to the British presence in India. In return, local potentates were permitted to learn English and taught the etiquette of nibbling cucumber sandwiches with His Excellency at Government House.

If the British had granted India self-government on the Canadian and Australian pattern after the first world war, it is unlikely that the sub-continent would have been divided. Partition was not a planned conspiracy by either the British or Jinnah. It came about because of a combination of circumstances during the 40's, including the second world war. Jinnah backed the war-effort, the Congress demanded Independence. Some scores had to be settled. Pakistan was imperialism's rap on the knuckle for Indian nationalism.

Nehru and Jinnah were both shaken by the orgy of barbarism. It offended all their instincts. But it was Mahatma Gandhi who paid the ultimate price. For defending the right to life of innocent Muslims in post-partition India he was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, a fundamentalist Hindu fanatic. Godse was hanged, but two decades later, Godse's brother told Channel 4 that he regretted nothing. What happened had to happen.

Partition was a disaster, adjacent to which there lurked another. The two parts of Pakistan were divided by culture, language, political tradition - and 1,000 miles of India. The predominantly Punjabi military bureaucratic elite belonged to West Pakistan, while the Bengali majority of the population (60 per cent) lived in East Pakistan. The refusal of the military rulers in permit democracy led to a successful uprising in 1968. A dictator was toppled. In the elections that followed, the Bengalis of East Pakistan was a big majority. They were not permitted to take office. The army invaded the eastern part of its own country. There was a massacre of intellectuals and mass rape (Punjabi soldiers had been told to "change the genes" of Bengalis forever) followed by a civil war. Bangladesh was born. One partition had


led to another.

This was followed by Bhutto taking over Pakistan, failing to keep his populist promises ("food, clothing and shelter for all") and being first toppled and subsequently executed by his one-time favourite General Zia, preached Islam, but made the country a heroin state, which corrupted it on every level. Neither Bhutto's daughter, Benazir Bhutto, nor Zia's protégée and current prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, have managed to make much difference to the lives of the majority. The rational governance of this wretched state eludes the politicians, but then a triple heart by-pass is not much use when the patient is suffering from cancer.

India, too was damaged by partition. The Nehru years (1947-64) disguised the processes underneath, but now the furies are out in the open. Bombay, once the centre of cosmopolitanism, is now Mumbai and under the sway of a neo-fascist Hindu organisation. In their absurd search for a new Indian identity, the scoundrel parties have rediscovered Hinduism, and sections of the "secular". Congress have fallen into line. Communal riots have claimed tens of thousands of lives over the past 50 years. It has not been as bad as Pakistan, but it is trying hard.

Is there a way out of this holy mess? In the short term the only solution is a serious rapprochement between all three states in the sub-continent. This requires a massive cut in the military expenditure which cripples all three economies and wide ranging political and economic agreements. A South Asian economic entity would benefit all the participants. This coupled with the possibility of opening the borders so that citizens can travel between the countries with ease would go some way to creating the conditions for a long term solution to satisfy the needs of the whole sub-continent. Resistance to such an evolution is strongest from vested interests in Pakistan which, ironically, has the most to gain.

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Jayalalitha, Vai.Go and Swamy

Tamil Nadu's Unholy Trinity

T.N.Gopalan

He was not exactly a triple pillar of Rome earlier. To say that he has become a strumpets fool would be making a loathsomely anti-feminist statement. But then the fact remains Mr. Vai. Gopalsamy has suffered a grievous fall in his political career with his decision to join hands with the much reviled Jayalalitha, and it is difficult to see whether he would ever be able to recover from his continuing blunders and rehabilitate himself in the public eye.

Vai. Go. the fiery Eelamist, a self-proclaimed admirer of the Tiger supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran, was easily the most promising youngster in the DMK till he was eased out by a crafty Karunanidhi in 1994 and certainly a darling of the younger cadres. If only he had played his cards more deftly, he might not have found himself out of the party which had groomed him and which still was a very important party in the state, though unable to come back to power at the time his differences with Karunanidhi burst into the open.

If his ideological moorings were vague and amorphous, he could not be blamed - after all it was long since the Dravidian movement had ceased to be any great ideological vehicle. After toppling the Brahmins from their position of pre-eminence in the social hierarchy, the movement seemed to have lost its steam even during the times of Perrier EVR. And the DMK which had been expressly floated to try and capture state power through the parliamentary path had degenerated under Karunanidhi into a party of greedy manipulators with no greater vision than getting rich quick and acquiring social clout for purely selfish reasons. Vai. Go had risen to stardom in such a milieu, and so if anyone had expected him to provide any new orientation to the Dravidian movement, it was not his fault. At the same time, though, his mouthing of fierce Tamil nationalist rhetoric seemed to imply that he was perhaps taking the DMK's stated plank a bit too seriously or naively. And his championing of the Eelam cause, paying cloying tributes to the LTTE, in meeting after meeting, rally after rally, in the eighties and early nineties endeared him to the starry-eyed Tamil nationalists inside and outside the DMK. Some Tiger cadres had actually campaigned for him when he contested the Sivakasi Lok Sabha election in 1991.

(That he bit the dust against Kalimuthu, another sabre-rattler, but since turned a shameless apologist of Jayalalitha, is an eloquent commentary on Tamil nationalism, but that is a different story.)

No surprise then that Vai. Go. came to be hailed as Tamil Nadu's own Prabhakaran, fired as he was by a pan-Tamil vision and who could join hands with the LTTE supremo at some future date and carve out a new Tamil nation, thus bringing back the glory of the great Tamil society of yore which had dominated over half of the world or at least most of South and South East Asia.

He also consciously projected such an image and undertook a pilgrimage to Tamil Eelam in 1989 - at a time when the IPKF was battling it out with the Tigers and Vai. Gos then leader Karunanidhi was having a tough time of it, trying to balance between his role as the Chief Minister of a state in the Indian Union and that of the crusader for Tamil interests. He was greatly embarrassed at his protégé's foray which, he said, he had not authorised.

Helplessly watching Vai. Go's popularity rise inside and outside the DMK and realising that he was firmly positioning himself as the heir apparent, Karunanidhi was waiting for the right time to nip the potential challenge to his leadership in the bud. And the opportunity did come when the Tigers hailed Vai. Go as the most fitting leader for the Tamils of Tamil Nadu. Karunanidhi pounced on the article in question and went on to conjure up a conspiracy to eliminate him and install Vai. Go in power. There was no question that the wily DMK chief was only looking for some excuse or other to throw him out and make succession easier for his own son Stalin. Still if Vai. Go had not decided to join the battle, instead tried to consolidate his hold over the party machinery silently - his supporters after all had bagged nine district units in the inner party elections - Karunanidhi would have been hard put to sideline him. But he overestimated his own appeal and underestimated Karunanidhi's own hold, besides saw little future for the DMK since the AIADMK juggernaut was going strong at the time and threatened to do so for ever. So instead of trying to make peace with his leader, Vai. Go split and formed his Marumalrchi Dravida Munnetra Kazha-

gam which vowed to be more faithful to the Dravidian principles than the DMK.

But when he chose to admit some former AIADMK ministers booted out by Jayalalitha and began to sing praises of MGR whom he had excoriated all along, it was clear that he would not hesitate to dilute his professed convictions in his quest for votes. And when he attracted some good crowds and his fledgling party put in a decent performance in a Lok Sabha by-election, his stocks rose and the CPM became his ally in the fond hope that in the not-too-distant future, he would capture the DMK political space.

But in the anti-Jaya storm of 1996, he and his friends were all swept away. The MDMK could not win a single constituency, Assembly or Lok Sabha, he himself getting drubbed.

By that time his admiration for Prabhakaran had evaporated into thin air. He spoke less and less of Eelam, afraid that doing so could cost him votes. Worse, in his affidavit before the Jain Commission investigating the conspiracy angle behind the Rajiv assassination, he did not even dare mention the word Eelam and he claimed he had gone to northern parts of Sri Lanka only to explore the possibilities of bringing the warring parties together.

This very same man had boasted to this writer of his connections to Prabhakaran, recalled with relish how the Tigers used to play the cassettes of his speeches in street-corners in Jaffna, how the very mention of Eelam and Prabhakaran sent his pulse racing and so on. If he could thus turn his back on one of his much vaunted idols, no wonder now he has chosen to join hands with Jayalalitha, the very woman whom he had denounced as the very personification of evil and with Dr. Subramanian Swamy, one of the most execrable politicians sans any kind of norms ever to have blighted the Indian firmament - my aim is to dethrone Karunanidhi and save the Tamil society, he says, but no one takes him seriously anymore.

Jaya herself is thoroughly discredited. There are no signs of her revival at the moment though she continues to draw good crowds. Unless Karunanidhi commits some horrible blunder, there is no way the electorate are going to plump again for her, especially so after her stubborn refusal to reform herself and the sensational disclosures of her ill-gotten wealth. And Swamy cannot win a single seat by himself and his appeal, if any, is confined solely to some urban-based myopic intelligentsia. What Vai. Go hopes to gain from such a combine is anybody's guess, barring of course his relentless but thus far vain quest to remain politically

(Continued on next page)

FRATRICIDE AMONG TAMIL EXTREMISTS IN TAMIL NADU

RAMESH GOPALAKRISHNAN

The fratricidal battles among Lankan Tamil militant groups in Lanka at last had its echo in Tamil Nadu. In the first week of June, two major factions of the Tamil Nadu Liberation Force (TNLF) clashed in their strongholds near Vallam, a small village near the Chennai-Tiruchirapalli rail line, leading to the gruesome death of four persons. The clashes were the outcome of an intense power struggle for establishing hegemony over the region. The murders came to many as a chilly reminder of the fact that some of these groups, which had been espousing separatism, now have very little of ideology left in them and whatever is left in them will soon have less and less to do with the problems of the poor and downtrodden whose causes they had once championed.

The TNLF was set up in the early eighties by Tamilarasan, who had left his engineering degree at a Coimbatore college to become a fiery left extremist. Reports speak of his conversion to Marxism-Leninism after a meeting with the legendary Charu Mazumdar, the Naxalite leader from Bengal who visited Tamil Nadu in the early seventies before his eventual capture and death. Tamilarasan returned to his native region and came under the tutelage of Kaliyaperumal, a Tamil scholar-turned-peasant activist-

turned extremist. Over the years, the disciple and the guru parted ways with Kaliyaperumal sticking to the vision of a popular-democratic revolution in the countryside and Tamilarasan preferring a more violent path. Kaliyaperumal, in the meantime, was on the run. His entire family was put behind bars and only the supreme court intervention could secure their release.

The coming of the eighties saw Tamilarasan getting inspired from the activities of the Lankan Tamil militant groups and he soon got ready to move towards violent separatism. Kaliyaperumal, too, was attracted towards separatism, but he had tempered his views with pragmatism and realism. The debate between them brought about a split and Tamilarasan and his supporters founded the TNLF and Kaliyaperumal held a convention to set up the Tamil Nadu Communist Party.

Within two years, Tamilarasan extended his group's activities from securing the government contracts for picking cashew fruits to the local peasants to training his cadres in arms. Arms were, and perhaps still are, freely available in Tamil Nadu, courtesy supply links for Lankan militant groups and disgruntled militants. The best way to get funds for buying sophisticated arms and communication equipment was to loot banks.

(continued from page 27)

relevant. If in order not to antagonise the middle classes or be seen as anti-national he quietly buried all his Eelam enthusiasm, he will now forget all his anti-Brahmin, fiery Tamil nationalist rhetoric in order to remain acceptable to his new allies. That he should join an with someone like Swamy who continuously taunted him as unpatriotic, anti-national and a dangerous apologist and agent of a brutal guerrilla outfit is only a measure of his desperation.

In a way Vai.Go's tragedy reflects the pathetic state to which nationalism in Tamil Nadu has fallen. Jayalalitha once had the audacity to describe herself as the latest stage in the evolution of the Dravidian movement and positioned herself as the direct descendant of Periyar. Now in the company of this lady who wrought havoc on the Tamil society for five long years and of a rootless, shameless

and conviction-proof Swamy, Vai.Go vows to crusade for the restoration of the Tamil glory.

Those head-in-the-clouds and fanatical Tamil extremists for whom still Prabhakaran represents all that is best in the Tamil history are now terribly embarrassed. But with Vai.Go finished as their fellow-traveller, some Pol Potist Tamil nationalist gangs operating in central Tamil Nadu also liquidated and the likes of K.Veeramani and P.Nedumaran already exposed as nothing more than a bunch of self-serving opportunists, the search for a new hero has begun.

It is extremely unlikely that they will ever see anything wrong with their own ideology or world view and so the charade will continue while men like Stalin, Chidambaram and Tirunavukkarasu would walk away with the votes in the future, leaving the Tamil nationalists high and dry. □

Tamilarasan did this and used the money to buy timer-devices and explosives. Deciding to pursue the path of spectacular success, his cadres chose to blast a rail-bridge in the nick of time to derail the approaching Chennai-Tiruchirapalli Rockfort express. The tragedy which took place on March 15, 1987, consumed 25 lives and this act of terrorism did a lot of harm to the cause of Tamils fighting for their homeland in Lanka.

September 1, 1987, saw the gruesome death of Tamilarasan and four of his supporters in a clash, during the looting of a bank, with villagers at Ponparappi, not far from his native village. While police maintained that those who stoned Tamilarasan and four others to death were villagers and others alleging that plainclothesmen had killed them. The deaths saw a relative lull in the TNLF. There was also a polarisation on caste lines, with several of Tamilarasan's supporters joining the fledgling Pattali Makkal Katchi, which evolved from the Vanniar Sangam, and others joining the emerging Dalit groups including the Liberation Panthers. The late eighties, which saw the Tianmen massacre and the collapse of the communist bloc, brought about a disenchantment and these disparate factions had no qualms in dubbing all allusions to internationalism and universalism as pretentious. A number of Marxist ideologues made a beeline to the politics of mainstream Dravidian parties and coolly started using their political parlance.

The TNLF itself was led by Ilavarasan and Ramasamy who were to clash over the old issue of looting banks. While Ramasamy felt that the income from the extortion of cashewnut contractors was sufficient, the other faction went ahead and looted the Vayaloor primary cooperative bank. The faction also eliminated one Natarajan who tried a blackmail trick near the Mangalamedu police station. Natarajan's burnt body and skull were recovered from a paddy field.

Last year saw the brutal murder of Ramakrishnan, a Congress trade union leader in Ariyalur area who had been acting at the behest of a leading cement factory firm. Ramasamy, who was aghast at the murders, suspected the hand of Ilavarasan group in them and wanted to break away. He started pestering Ilavarasan to part with his share of the "organisational funds" and ultimately broke away to set up his own brand of the TNLA!

Both the factions started concentrating on settling local civil disputes, backing their verdicts with gun power and the language of popular extremism. Ramasamy was a spectacular success in settling civil disputes using kangaroo courts and his faction managed to keep the lo-

(continued on next page)

INDIA'S COSTLY INSURGENCY WARS IN THE NORTH-EAST

RAMESH GOPALAKRISHNAN

For the last so many years, about 75,000 army personnel and paramilitary soldiers belonging to the Assam Rifles, Rashtriya Rifles and the Central Reserve Police Force, have been involved in a cruel war with shadowy adversaries who are fighting nationality battles in a distant, hilly part of India which borders Bhutan, Bangla Desh, Myanmar and China. Problems of culture, nationality and the wages of war apart, the region has seen the spread of drug-trafficking, drug overuse, prostitution and spread of AIDS in the last one decade.

Till not long ago, this region comprising of the states of Assam, Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh used to be known to Delhi journalists as the North-East with a capital N and capital E. Union home minister Indrajit Gupta, a diehard communist veteran, recently banned this word from official circles, in an effort to confer a distinct identity on each state, something for which a whopping number of 37 armed militant groups have been fighting for long!

Yet, the battles rage on for several unfulfilled demands. Rapid-fire Kalashnikov assault rifles, rocket launchers, light machine guns, massive landmines and grenades, an assortment of stenguns, self-loading rifles, an assortment of pistols and revolvers are freely used by guerrilla groups who also revel in the use of expensive communication equipment. There have been disturbing reports of drug money being laundered to buy these weapons.

Declassified details made available to the Indian media now reveal that two Na-

tional Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) factions led by Isac Swu and Khaplang have more than 8,000 guerillas equipped with sleek, lethal weapons and ever-willing to fight out a long, protracted jungle war. There are more than 10,000 guerillas in the Nagaland-Manipur area alone, most of them belonging to the NSCN factions, the United National Liberation Front of Manipur (UNLF), the People's Liberation Army (PLA), Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), Kuki National Front (KNF) and the Kuki National Army (KNA). Most of them remain banned.

Of the above, the NSCN, which was formed in the aftermath of the death of the legendary Naga leader Z A Phizo in exile at London, has grown very fast. The organisation split into two groups led by Isac Swu and Khaplang, with the latter being suspected as being propped by Indian intelligence agencies to curb the activities of the former, something familiar to watchers of the activities of the Lankan Tamil militant groups. The Kuki outfits are also reportedly propelled by the intelligence agencies to undercut the Naga factions.

In Manipur, the People's Liberation Army, founded by the late N Biseshwar Singh in 1978, has more than 1,400 cadres with 400 of them working overground. The UNLF, its rival, had been founded earlier, way back in 1964, by Areambam Somorendro Singh. But, the UNLF itself later split into two factions led by Namoljam Oken Singh and R K Maghen Singh. The PREPAK, with a strength of 180 cadres in two factions, and the KCP

also taken over by the murderers. The badly dismembered body of Dharmarajan was recovered only on June 7. The Ramasamy faction, deciding to retaliate, killed Sethu and Vikraman of the rival faction near Srimushnam and retrieved Ramasamy's motorcyle from them. Ilavarasan, in an interview to a local Tamil magazine from a secret hideout, disowned responsibility for the killings.

The police have arrested only seven persons on charges of these murders in the region. The dark recesses of cashew groves in this region might well see a few more dead bodies in the weeks to come. Alas, to what low depths can the noble souls of this world sink? □

are more shadowy than the other two groups.

In Mizoram, relative peace prevails, but Laldenga, the unquestioned leader of the armed Mizo National Front, who made peace with the Delhi establishment when Rajiv Gandhi was in power, was a bitter man after he was ousted in a clean democratic coup by his deputy Lalthanhawla. Tripura is perpetually in political crisis and the surrender of Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) following an agreement signed when Rajiv Gandhi was prime minister has not worked wonders as expected.

The wars, which started out decades ago in the jungles of Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur, have spread to the Brahmaputra valley where the United Liberation Force of Assam (ULFA), which is the armed rival of the ruling Asom Gana Parishad, is fighting a separate nationality battle. The ULFA is believed to have more than 2,000 cadres, some of them really battle-scarred veterans. The organisation is known to have developed good links with the People's War Group of Naxalites operating in Andhra Pradesh and the LTTE. Attempts to get ULFA to the negotiating table have not met with much success. The recent attempt on the life of chief minister P K Mahanta is a clear indication of the troubled scenario in the state. Mahanta also has to deal with the much-smaller Bodo Security Force (BSF) which wants a separate Bodoland state within India. Bodo militants have become expert in blasting railway tracks and planting train bombs.

What these militant groups resent most is the presence of mainstream Bengalis, Marwaris and south Indians who have come to occupy key places in the public sphere of these states. Attempts to push them out by threats or force are quite common. "Indian imperialism" is an easy catchword for recruitment of young males into these militant groups. Once the decision is made, the ideology could go off in no time and there is always an opportunity to make easy money through arms deals, extraction and even drug-trafficking.

Even fifty years after Indian independence, these wars rage on, claiming casualties in routine landmine blasts, ambushes, firing assaults, sexual assaults and what not. There have been some attempts from the Indian establishment to politically deal with the demands made by these groups, but the urge to treat them as typical "law and order" problems gets the better of politicians, army top brass and bureaucrats. The result: these wars could well last into the next century, compounding the misery and tragedy of the smaller communities and nationalities. Is there a lesson in all this for the Lankan Tamil militant groups? □

(Continued from page 28)

cal police under check by a combination of bribery and terror. The writ of the two factions ran large at more than 100 villages in the area. The factions ultimately clashed over the issue of taking cashew groves on direct contract. While Ramasamy maintained that the factions could do with a small level of extortion, the Ilavarasan faction wanted the entire contract for itself.

The dispute led to the kidnapping of Dharmarajan, one of Ramasamy's key lieutenants, on June 3 at Vallam. The very next day, Ramasamy was surrounded and hacked to death by a seven-member gang in the same village. His motorcyle was

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MATRIMONIAL

Mother seeks partner for son, 42, nurse, Austrian citizen, divorcee, willing send snap, details. M 968 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu seeks partner for his nephew, 28, British citizen holding British University degree and accountancy qualifications, presently working abroad. Send details. M 969 c/o TAMIL Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professionally qualified groom employed in UK with permanent residence between 32-35 for Ph.D. qualified daughter employed in UK. Send horoscope, photograph, details. M 970 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional vegetarian groom under 30 for daughter in UK. Send horoscope, photograph, details. M 971 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek doctor groom for attractive daughter, 24, 5'2", final year medical student in London with PR. Please send horoscope, details to P.O.Box 11666, London SW19 7ZE. All correspondence treated confidentially and returned.

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Rathini daughter of Dr. & Mrs. T. Ratnavel of 20 Langley Way, Watford, Herts., WD1 3EQ and Simon James Rawson on 16th August 1997 at Shendish Manor, Apsley, Herts.

Vijayalatha (Latha) daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Vijayapalan of Uyarapulam, Anaicoddai, Sri Lanka presently of Flat 2, Allford Court, Bromley Road, London SE6 2XL and Raveenthiran (Ravi) son of Mr. & Mrs. Shanmuganathan of Thyiddy, Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka on 17th August 1997 at London Sri Murugan Temple, 78 Church Road, London E12 6AF.

Vamathy daughter of Mr. & Mrs. K. Kanagalingam formerly of 84 Temple Road, Nallur, Jaffna and presently of 62-3600 Morningstar Drive, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada L4T 1Y5 and Akan eldest son of Mr. & Mrs. M. Thuraiajah of

'Umaiyavan Urai', 36-38 Potpathi Road, Kokuvil, Sri Lanka on 17th August 97 at Bombay Palace, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

Muralitharan (Billy) son of Mr. & Mrs. R. Ananthanathan of 16 Charterhouse Avenue, Sudbury, Middlesex HA0 3DB and Anupama daughter of Mr. & Mrs. N. Sivarajah of 55th Lane, Colombo 6, Sri Lanka on 18th August 1997 at New Kathiresan Hall, Colombo 5, Sri Lanka.

Muraleetharan son of Mr. & Mrs. T. Ramachandran of 141 Merton Hall Road, London SW19 3PY and Kohilam daughter of Mr. & Mrs. S. Gnanapandithan of 320 Dixon Road, Apt. 407, Weston, Ontario M9R 1S8, Canada on 21st August 1997 at Shree Ganapathy Temple, London SW19.

OBITUARIES



Mrs. Chellamma Pararajasingam (90), beloved daughter of the late Mr. & Mrs. Kadirithamby of Urelu, Jaffna; loving sister of late Dr. Rajaratnam of Malaysia; beloved wife of late Sinnathurai Pararajasingam (Malayan pensioner); beloved mother of Mathivathini (USA), Parameswari, Pathmarani, (both of UK), late Yogarane, Selvaranee (UK), late Dr. Jeyarajah, Jeyadevi (UK), and Dr. Ravirajah (USA); loving mother-in-law of late R.C. Tharmaratnam (D.L.O.), M. Nadarajah (Accountant), late S. Vithuvaratnam, Dr. V. Thuraisamy (USA), Capt. K. Chandran (UK), Rukmani (USA), Yogarajah (UK) and Geetha (UK) passed away peacefully after a brief illness in London on 6th June 1997 and was cremated on 10th June. She leaves be-

hind several grand children and great grand children.

The members of the family thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and floral tributes and assisted in various ways during the period of sorrow. - 40 Knightwood Crescent, New Malden, Surrey KT3 5JS. Tel: 0181 942 7919.



Mrs. Sugirtham Pathmanathan, beloved wife of late Chelliah Pathmanathan (formerly of Richard Peris & Co.); loving mother of Nandakumar (Path, Canada), Suriyakumar (Colombo), Yasodhara (London), Subadhra (Kamala, Hatton National Bank, Colombo) and Dilidhra (London); mother-in-law of Gayathri (Canada), Kamalini (Colombo), Sabendran (London), Sivathanan (Colombo) and Vijith Dharmasena (London); loving grandmother of Vyshali and Kushalini, Sanjay and Sajini, Satheeshan and Shangari, Dhuwaraka, Bianca and Dmitri passed away peacefully on 24th July 1997 in Colombo after a short illness. Cremation took place at Kanatte Cemetery on 27th July.

The members of the family wish to thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and floral tributes and helped them in several ways during the period of sorrow. - 39 Pamankade Lane, Colombo 6, Sri Lanka. Tel: 586101/ 9 Newton Way, London N18 1JB. Tel: 0181 372 7978.



Gowri Manohari Kulavarathasah (48), beloved wife of

K. Kulavarathasah (ADB, Manila); loving mother of Mohana Jeyatharan (Singapore) and Rajev Dharmendra (Colombo); much loved sister of Dr. Devendra (Shrewsbury, UK); daughter of late S. Velayutham (former Director, External Resources, Ceylon Government) and late Saraswathie Velayutham; mother-in-law of Jeyatharan (Civil Engineer, Singapore); sister-in-law of Rajeswari Selvaratnam (Switzerland), Devi Sivasubramaniam (Hounslow), Sakthi Shanmugalingam (Coventry) and Shyamala Devendra passed away in Singapore on 3rd June 1997 following a brief illness. Cremation according to traditional Hindu rites took place at General Cemetery, Kanatte on 5th June in the presence of a large gathering of friends and family.

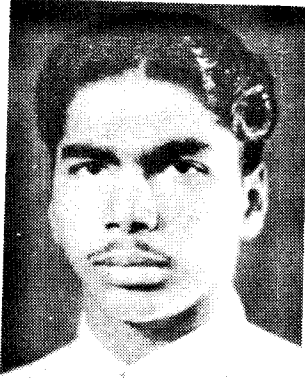
The members of the family wish to thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, who sent messages of sympathy and support and helped in numerous other ways. - 16 Ryelands, Radbrook, Shrewsbury, UK.



Dr. Veerasingham Karunanandan Sriveeraraj Ramadas, Retired General Practitioner, South Yorkshire; beloved husband of Gangamayaki; loving father of Haran-chandran, Umadevi and Lingeswari; loving father-in-law of Kala, Chandsekar and Nihal-daran; brother of Rajananthan (Canada), Bavananthan (USA), Premananthan (Kenya), Mrs. Vimala Krishnapillai (Sri Lanka), Mrs. Usha Thuraiajah (Canada) and Mrs. Sivakumari Thyagarajah (Canada) passed away peacefully on Saturday, 9th August 1997 in London and was cremated on 14th August.

The members of his family wish to thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and floral tributes and assisted them in several ways during the period of great sorrow. - 11 Kathleen Avenue, Alperton, Wembley, Middx., HA0 4JA. Tel: 0181 902 3127.

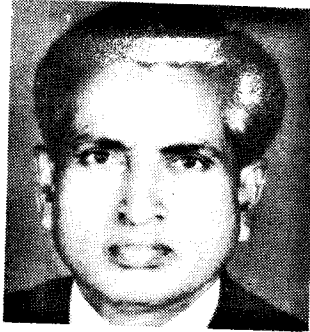
IN MEMORIAM



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

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his loving wife Rani; children Thirukumaran (Australia), Vasuki (Sri Lanka), Devaki (Australia), Sutharsan (UK) and Saratha Devi (Australia); daughter-in-law, sons-in-

law, grandchildren, sister and in-laws. - 67B St. Ann's Road, London N15 6NJ. Tel: 0181 802 5601.



Mr. Mayilvaganam Velummayilum, J.P., U.M., Attorney-at-law and former Chairman, Urban Council, Point Pedro, Sri Lanka passed away on 31.8.89 and the eighth anniversary of his demise falls on 31.8.97.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his loving wife; children Thayanandarajah (UK), Nithianandarajah (New Zealand), Mayilvaganarajah (UK), Chitra (Colombo), Anandarajah, Krishnarajah, and Jayanthi (all of Madras); grandsons Cameron, Ewan and

Atharson; son-in-law Kamaleswaran (Colombo); daughters-in-law Sumitra (UK), Devi (New Zealand), relatives, friends and a host of grateful constituents. - 59 Edgwarebury Gardens, Edgware, Middx., HA8 8LL.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

September 1 Amavasai; Thondamannar Selvasanathy Temple flag hoisting ceremony.

Sept. 3 Feast of St. Gregory.

Sept. 5 Vinayaka Chaturthi.

Sept. 6 South London Tamil Welfare Group (SLTWG) trip to Eastbourne Beach. Tel: 0181 545 3313.

Sept. 7 Aavani Sunday (4); Sashti.

Sept. 8 Feast of the Birthday of Our Lady Mary.

Sept. 11 Aavani Moolam.

Sept. 13 Aavani Onam; Ekathasi; SLTWG Women Front Dress Making Class. Tel: 0181 545 3313.

Sept. 14. Pirathosam; Aavani Last Sunday (5); Aavani Avit-tam; Feast of the Triumph of the Cross. 11.00am Skanda Varodaya College O.S.A. (UK) 12th Annual Reunion Lunch,

A.G.M., and Three hour recital of light songs by Foremost Singing Maestro Sangeetha Pooshanam Pon Suntharalingam at Manor Park Hall, Malden Road, New Malden, Surrey. Tel: 0181 644 0972/660 1522/651 6129.

Sept. 16 Full Moon; Feast of St. Cornelius.

Sept. 17 Feast of St. Robert.

Sept. 19 Sankatahara Chaturthi.

Sept. 20 Puraddasi Sani (1).

Sept. 21 Karthikai; 1.00pm Kokuvil Hindu College OSA (UK) A.G.M. and Lunch at Coston Primary School Hall, Old Field Lane South, Greenford, Middx. Tel: 0181 578 3159.

Sept. 27 Puraddasi Sani (2); Ekathasi; SLTWG Drop in: Tel: 0181 545 3313.

Sept. 28 Pirathosam; 6.30pm Tamil Union of Herts & Lakshmi Art Centre present An Evening of Bharatha Natyam in aid of University of Jaffna Students' Welfare Fund at Watersmeet Theatre, High Street, Rickmansworth, Herts. Tel: 01923 463 466.

Sept. 30 Feast of St. Jerome.

CANADIAN NEWSLETTER

Weather: With a good summer and temperatures ranging from 25 to 30 degrees celsius and with Tamil festivities and meetings all over Toronto, one gets the feelings of living in Wellawatte!

Suresh Manickavasagar: The hearing in the case to seek the release of Suresh detained under the Immigration Act for alleged connection to the LTTE, that began in Toronto on 19th March ended in Ottawa in the first week of July 1997. In this case Pala Nedumaran and former Kayts M.P. Mr. V. Navaratnam gave evidence and the verdict is due in a couple of months. Justice Max Teitelbaum presided over the hearings.

Alumni Associations: There are fifty Alumni Associations of Sri Lankan schools in Toronto and this number is constantly increasing. These organisations rightly promote fellowship, sports and cultural activities and provide financial support to their respective alma mater. But in the field of promotion of cultural activities no other old students association can match the work done by the O.S.A. of a comparatively small school - The Uduppiddy American Mission College. Torontonians eagerly await the staging of their annual 'Vana Vil' programme in the summer months. This year the programme was staged on 26th and 27th July to a capacity audience and one must be lucky to be able to buy a ticket for the show. The ancient play 'Kathavarayan Koothu' stole the show and it was

followed by a dance drama depicting the sufferings of women through the ages.

The Senior Tamils' Centre held their annual general meeting on 31st May 1997 and the following office bearers were elected for the year 97/98. **President:** Mani Pathmarajah, **Vice President:** Siva Sivaramalingam, **Secretary:** K. Rathinasingham, **Treasurer:** Sri Jayanthan, **Asst. Treasurer:** S. Thiyagarajah, **Past President:** Rosalind Rajanayagam, **Committee:** Aloy Ratnasingham, M. Velauthapillai, Chris Kumaradas, S. Poopalasingam, James Balendra, Dhanam Tharmalingam, S. Anandamoorthy, V. Sri Renganathan and S. Tharmalingam (Editor). The Senior Tamils have received a Metro grant of \$10,000 to enhance their out-reach program. In their recreational program last year over 600 took part in educational tours and over 2100 participated in Bridge games.

Trade Show: The 6th Annual Trade Show of the Canada Ceylon Tamil Chamber of Commerce was held in the Metro East Trade Centre, Pickering on 19th and 20th July. The Guest of Honour was Mr. Jim Karigianis, Federal M.P. for Scarborough. Over 100 traders and a dozen government agencies and financial institutions took part. An attendance of over 10,000 was recorded. All arrangements were in the able hands of a successful businessman Mr. Raj Rajadurai, the current president of the Chamber.

The Third Annual J.S.S.A. (Canada) Sports Festival was held on 9th August 1997. A well known sportsman and Centralite Mr. V.D. Jeyaratnasingham will be the Chief Guest.

University of Toronto Cultural Evening was presented in the form of a talent contest at Woburn College Hall on 6th July 1997 in the presence of a large gathering. Mr. P. Susaihasan was the Chief Guest and the main participants were from the Universities of Toronto, McMaster, Carleton, York and Windsor.



The highlight of the evening was the Peacock dance performed by fourteen year old Shivanthi Chinnakone. It was a pleasure to see the young dancer from UK perform not only to a high standard but with much evident enjoyment and holding the audience spellbound. She won the first place in the classical dance competition. Shivanthi is a student of Smt Shureshku-mar of UK. The judges of the talent

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competition were Mr. Chandramohan, Mr. Bala Baskaran, Mrs. Vamathy Kanagalingam, Mrs. Indravathany and Miss Anie Jeyakumar.

Cricket: The annual encounter between the old students of St. Johns and Central ended in a win for the Johnians and the match between St. Patricks and Jaffna College resulted in a victory for the Patri-cians. Both matches were played on August 3rd in the same park at the Sunny Brook Cricket Stadium.

British Columbia: The International Tamil community may not be aware that there are over ten thousand Tamil speaking residents in British Columbia on the west coast of Canada famous for its natural beauty and resources. Tamils started to arrive in 1900 and The Thamil Cultural Society (TCS) was inaugurated in 1994 and its members are from Tamil Nadu, Sri Lanka, Fiji, Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius and South Africa; the vast majority being from Sri Lanka.

The society runs a Tamil language school on Saturdays and there are over 60 students and the school is supervised by Mr. S. Sivabalasingham, a graduate from the Peradeniya University. There are satellite schools in and around Vancouver, handled by several voluntary teachers and supervised by Mr. S. Sivaloganathan, formerly of the Sri Lankan Attorney General's Department.

The 130th Anniversary of the Canadian Confederation was celebrated in a grand manner on 1st July at Canada Place in Vancouver and the main theme was the promoting of the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation. The association participated by performing 'Kurathi Dance' at the Indian Pavilion, contributed by Indu Nadesh and Arthy Kandasamy, pupils of Mrs. Srimathy Kandasamy, a graduate of the Ram-nathan Academy, Jaffna. A dance pose from the performance appears below.



Mr. Silan Kadrigamar, former Lecturer, University of Colombo, visited B.C. in July. His presentation to the members of TCS on Human Rights and the present political climate in Sri Lanka was well received. On the same day he addressed the Sri Lankan Christian Fellowship at their summer gathering on the role of the Christian Church during this turbulent time in Sri Lanka. The SLCF comprises all the different races from Sri Lanka and there were a large number of Hindus and a few Buddhists present.

Early this year Prof. Balasunderampillai, Vice Chancellor of the Jaffna University visited B.C. and gave a report on the needs and wants of the Jaffna Campus.

His emotional and humble requests were sympathetically received by the members of the TCS.

Remembering Chellappah Edward Rajasingham

There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune. On the 5th of December 1950 a six rupee receipt from Chellappah Edward Rajasingham of the tutorial staff of Union College, Tellippallai given to me was taken. There was no turning back. I was really grieved to hear of the passing away of a great teacher in Australia. It came as a bolt from the blue, for he wrote to me on the 10th of April 1997 a long letter expressing his thoughts that moved me to see his second daughter Thaya Hastings with a view to getting him back to Sri Lanka for he yearned to spend a few months in Uduvil amongst his kith and kin, before he answered his Master's call.

A product of the Ludowyke era, he was a teacher of English par excellence. His assembly talks every month for just six minutes were eagerly looked forward to by his charges, for they instilled in our young minds, noble thoughts of inspiration and encouragement. He was editor of the Morning Star; Head of the College Dramatic Society; Patron of The Union - the Senior Literary Association, Editor of the Union College magazine. He produced the English plays at the Annual Prize Days.

To quote a chunk from his welcome speech delivered at the College Prize Day in October 1949. 'In many respects Ladies and Gentlemen, the founders of this institution, James Richards, Daniel Poor and Edward Warren - were pioneers. In the emphasis they gave to the study of the mother tongue, in the stress they made on vocational education, in the lessons they inculcated in the pupils on the dignity of labour, those pioneers paved the path along which modern educationists are groping their way. It shall be the endeavour of all those entrusted with the responsibility of imparting education within pioneer mission stations to see that a worthy past is followed by an equally worthy future'.

A teacher with a vision moulded his charges to be not 'dumb driven cattle but heroes in the strife.'

So good night sweet prince! May the host of angels sing thee to thy rest.

C. Kanapathypillai,
Colombo 6.

Sixth Annual Saiva Conference

The London Meikandan Aadheenam Trust and its International Educational Division - 'The World Saiva Council' are holding their 6th World Saiva Conference at The Tamil University, Tanjavur, South India from 19th to 21st December 1997, following their very successful conferences held in Durban last year and in Colombo in 1965. The co-sponsors of this conference are the Thiruppanandhal Kasi Mutt and the Tamil University, Tanjavur who are hosting the

conference including its entire organisation and administration. The patrons of the conference are H.H. Sri Kasivasi Muthukumaraswami Thambiran (Head of Kasi Mutt), Thavath-Thiru Santhalinga Ramasamy Adikalaar (Head of Perur Mutt), Thavath-Thiru Siva Nandhi Adikalaar (Head of London Meikandaar Mutt) and Dr. K. Karunakaran, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil University, Tanjavur.

The conference Secretariat based at the Tamil University is under Dr. G. Bhaskaran, Organising Secretary, School of Philosophy of the University, to whom all correspondence should be addressed, except for registration forms which are available at WSC in London E17. The conference theme is **Salvism for universal brotherhood and human upliftment.**

Accredited Delegates and Observers from UK and other WSC branches must send completed Registration forms etc by 15th September 1997 for purposes of accommodation, hospitality etc. Registration forms can also be obtained by subscribers of WSC's journal 'Saiva Ulakam'. Further information can be obtained from Secretary, WSC, 72 King Edward Road, London E17 6HZ. Tel: 0181 531 6435.

Arangetram in Switzerland



The Bharata Natya Arangetram of Kumari Barkavee only daughter of Mr. A. Pathmanathan and Mrs. Sarojini Pathmanathan of Luzern and disciple of Natakalaaimamani Smt Gnanasundan Vasan of Radha Nandanayala, Zurich. Switzerland took place on 5th July at the Zentum St. Michael Hall in Littau, Switzerland.

Barkavee, naturally gifted with a good stage personality, commenced the programme with a Pushpanjali in Gowla Raga and Eka Talam, followed by Gowthvar and Alarippu in Misra Talam. After the interval the first item was a Navarasa song in which she had a lot of scope for Bharata of the nine rasas, which she executed excellently. Apart from the Andral, Gyps, and Peacock dances, there was a dance

on 'Motherland Eelam' which was well received. Barkavee concluded her programme with a Thillana in Hindola Ragam and Kanda Eka Talam.

The Chief Guest Sri Alagu Gunaseelan and the guest speakers Mr. N. Muralitharan, Smt Kausalya Anandaraja and Smt Ragini Mohanraj spoke on the present trend of Bharata Natyam in western countries and the effect it had on the present generation to keep them abreast of the culture and traditions of the Tamils.

Barkavee was ably supported by Smt Gnanasundari - Nattuvangam, Smt Ambika Thamotheeram - Vocal, Sri Muthu Sivrajah - Mirdangam, Smt Komala Kandiah - Violin, Sri S. Sivaji - Flute, Sri R. Kamal - Tabla, and Sri S. Jegatheeswaran - Ganjira.

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THE FOREIGNER

By S Vireswer

When a man dies it is said that all the important incidents of his life flash before him, reminding him of its passions and its fullness as it drains away from him. I, unfortunately, am not in a position to see with such clarity. But above all other incidents there is actually something that has gnawed away, shaping my ideals as a sculptor fashions clay, slowly and with sudden touches. It has eroded my spirit, lit my soul, recurred in my fantasies and dashed my hopes. It still controls me as if I were a yo-yo and it is the finger on which I hang. I long to change it, to control it; to abolish it.

Sri Lanka is a small island off the South coast of India. It is the shape of a tear, and over the years it has been the cause of many. It was the land in which I was born eighteen years ago and still the land of my dreams. When I left the island permanently over fifteen years ago, a chubby little kid barely three years old or three feet tall, I always felt that I would go back eventually and live there for the rest of my life. This was not my thought at that tender age but was passed down to me by my parents during one of those intense parents/children sessions. Now here I am, eighteen, gaining more weight, looking over my shoulder at memories; looking forward to a place where I can live, but with no intention of settling permanently in the place where I am.

This would not be so bad if the place where I wanted to live were inhabitable. Unfortunately, it is not. Very soon after my birth Sri Lanka was dragged unwillingly into an exhausting, wasting civil war. It slowly became the land of misunderstanding and bigotry. Each side began building foundations to their arguments and this resulted in a fortress of views - an extreme intransigence and a belief that they were right. One hears that a little education is a dangerous thing. If so, then a lot of education is even more perilous. These intellectuals did not let their knowledge open their minds, but rather they closed it with their own rhetoric. Picking out the evidence that suited their views like bricklayers they built a solid wall between their notions and reality.

All this did not affect me when I was young and discovering bicycles, buses, trains and aeroplanes. We would go back to Sri Lanka each year visiting our relatives and people. All the smiles and

pampering do not prepare an innocent child for the day when he can no longer go to this place of warmth, sun, play and happiness; this place we called home. This was the time I was growing up, learning things with enthusiasm, always wanting more. The first time we did not manage to go home it was a momentous issue - for a moment. After that and once I was back at school, I had far too many things to worry about: my shoes, my clothes and my all-conquering football team.

Still the intellectuals in Sri Lanka had found no answer to the country's problems. When the brain finds no solution the brawn takes over. One youth picked up a gun and, like lemmings who follow each other off cliffs to their certain deaths in cold Scandinavia, other youths picked up guns, grenades and mortars at home.

When enlightenment was going through a difficult period in Sri Lanka, I began to find it at school. I went to England and at boarding school I discovered an educational home. In my mind this was a very temporary one. I ignored the situation in Sri Lanka hoping that it would resolve while I was not watching. I thought that if I worked hard at school then I was keeping my part of some deal and I would find an answer. But I had not brokered a pact with anyone. I was just deluded.

I developed an intransigence too. Sri Lanka is the better and I need not look for another home anywhere else. After six years in England, I had assimilated some English views that went slightly deeper than my accent. I was ashamed and embarrassed that I was developing an affection for this country. So I did as we have always done: I escaped to a new country. Here too I am not prepared to make those important decisions about the future.

But a university is a big step in a person's life. You have to look at what you have done and evaluate what you would like to do. Unfortunately I cannot abolish the war in my country, yet I do not want to change home. I have to cope with the effects of the civil war, the fact that I may not go back for a very long time to come. I have to live with this and learn to break free from most of its influence. Sri Lanka will always be my dream home, but now, just temporarily, I am a citizen of the world.

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