

SRI LANKA

(Ceylon)

NEWS LETTER

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Prime Minister's Visit

This month witnessed the first official bilateral visit to Britain of a Sri Lankan Prime Minister, when the Hon R. Premadasa, MP., accompanied by Mrs Premadasa, visited Britain as the guests of the British Government from 18th - 23rd July.

During his visit, the Prime Minister had talks with the British Government at two levels. He met with the British Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary to discuss matters of general interest, and met separately with the British Environment Secretary to discuss matters of a particular ministerial interest to him, in view of his own direct responsibility for Housing and Local Government in Sri Lanka.

The Prime Minister also had the opportunity of meeting with sections of the large expatriate Sri Lankan community in London, when the Co-Ordinating Committee for Sri Lankan Associations in Britain and the UNP Association here separately accorded him receptions.

Another feature of the Prime Minister's programme was a visit to the London Buddhist Vihara, when he presented on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka a donation in a sum of Sri Lanka Rupees One Million towards the London Vihara's Building Fund. The Prime Minister also gifted to the Vihara an historically important Buddha Statue, donated again by the Government of Sri Lanka.

Finally, the Prime Minister addressed the Royal Commonwealth Society on the subject of recent constitutional developments in Sri Lanka.

The Prime Minister was visiting London en-route Lusaka where he would lead the Sri Lankan Delegation at the Commonwealth Summit. In between those two commitments the Prime Minister was to make a brief official visit to Sweden.

In addition to his discussions with British Government Leaders on a wide range of matters of bilateral interest as well as international concern, the Prime Minister took the opportunity of presenting to representatives of the British media a balanced and up-to-date picture of Sri Lanka today. In this, he was particularly concerned with correcting some of the distortions reflected in sections of the British media through the hostile mis-representations of extremist Sri Lankan Tamils now living here.

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Press Comment on Government's record

Appended below is the text of an Editorial which appeared in the Ceylon Daily News, the oldest and most prestigious of Sri Lanka's daily news papers, marking the Second Anniversary of the present United National Party Government. The Editorial appeared in the Ceylon Daily News of Saturday, July 21, 1979.

" 'Satisfying two years'

" As it enters its third year in office next week, the United National Party government of President J.R. Jayewardene can look back with some satisfaction and pride on its performance over the past two years.

"Sri Lanka, blessed today with a highly stable democratic government whose strength is without parallel, perhaps in the whole world, with an open economy and following an independent foreign policy of strict neutrality, has become a Mecca for foreign investors.

"The political climate is so good that foreign governments both in the eastern and western blocs are backing President Jayewardene's government to the hilt with development assistance. Investors too from both blocs are pumping in capital to the delight of the Finance and Planning Minister, Ronnie de Mel.

"The government, which came into power at the July 1977 General Election with an unprecedented five-sixths majority, sweeping the Freedom Party government out of office and crushing the leftist parties, delivered the coup de grace to its opponents at the local government elections last May.

"The UNP government's political rivals cannot but concede that the UNP will not only run its full term until 1983 but will also stay in the saddle for a long, long time. With a hopelessly divided opposition and the Freedom Party of Mrs Bandaranaike, the only party which seems capable of salvaging its viability, wracked with bitter internal squabbles and dissension, the UNP finds itself sitting pretty.

"As one political commentator said after the crushing defeat the UNP inflicted on the opposition parties at the May local elections, the UNP government is in for a long innings - an innings reminiscent of the 30 year rule of the Indian National Congress.

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"With its foreign policy of strict neutrality and a stable government dedicated to democratic socialism and the setting up of a Just and Free Society, Sri Lanka today provides an ideal climate for foreign investments. It has also become one of the most credit-worthy nations of the third world.

"At the Aid Consortium meeting in Paris last May donor countries pledged a record 11.35 billion rupees of development assistance. This is a record-double the aid pledged last year. Furthermore, it was obtained without any pledges from Canada and Britain where the new governments could not make definite commitments without some study of their aid programs, Mr de Mel has said.

"A significant feature of this year's aid is that Sri Lanka was able to diversify its sources of development assistance. "Our aid program is completely in harmony with our foreign policy and friendship with all countries and we made a special point to do so" he added.

"Elsewhere on this page is a review of the government's record of work in the last two years and its plans to provide a happier life for Sri Lankans whom it brought out of bondage and from one of the darkest periods of the country's history, now referred to as the "seven year curse".

"Let us look at the record briefly;

"First political stability - a united purposeful government which knows where it is going.

* "The vicious inhuman laws that were designed and enacted under the previous regime have been repealed. Political prisoners have been released and democratic elections restored.

"The Public Security Act and Emergency Laws have been subjected to restraints and cannot now be enacted without the permission of Parliament.

"Every citizen in the country, irrespective of birth can live as a free man, educate his children, earn his living and choose his clothes.

"The new constitution which went into effect last September made far-reaching concessions to the Tamil speaking minorities. They were so far reaching that the Ceylon Workers Congress representing about 1.4 million Tamil plantation workers of Indian descent were brought into the mainstream of national life after living for

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generations as outcasts or serfs. They are today solidly behind the government.

"The only blot upon the political scene has been supplied by the Tamil United Liberation Front which is asking for something which it can never get. It is asking the nation to split itself asunder. To begin with, the TULF is now getting its deserts for covertly encouraging violence while affecting Gandhian principles of non-violence. It has sowed the wind and is now reaping the whirlwind.

"The government is now moving into the second stage of its strategy to rebuild the ruined economy it inherited. First by revitalising the tea, rubber and coconut industries and then by speeding the completion of the Mahaweli River Project and several other development programs now under way. Among them are the Free Trade Zone, the diversification of the export trade and a mammoth construction program. These are all designed to ease the problem of unemployment, increase production and contain the cost of living which gets out of hand most of the time because of unexpected oil price increases.

"The flood gates of indiscipline which were thrown open when Prime Minister Solomon Dias Bandaranaike came to power, after the UNP was routed in 1956, have now been locked again. There is order in the public and private sectors now. But the government's best intentions can be slowed to some extent by a bureaucracy which drags its feet when it should be moving at speed, and also by corruption in the public life. The canker of corruption throve like nobody's business in the seven years 1970 to 1977.

"There are reportedly signs of this evil surfacing again. Corruption at all levels must be rooted out ruthlessly, else the road to progress will be dotted by road blocks.

"The UNP also had to introduce some unpopular measures in the first budget, removing the rice and sugar subsidies for the more affluent half of the population. But these blows were cushioned to some extent by salary increases totalling about two billion rupees.

"Despite these measures Sri Lanka still remains a welfare state with the government carrying several burdensome subsidies. A massive development program, now on, promises to ease most of the problems that the country faces - mainly unemployment and the high cost of living.

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"Government leaders are confident that by the time the government reaches the end of its term most of the problems it now faces would be behind them. "

Non-Aligned Meeting in Colombo

The last Ministerial meeting of the Co-ordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement preparatory to the forthcoming Non-Aligned Summit Conference in Havana was held in Colombo during the first fortnight of June. It was attended by 23 of the 25 full Members of the Bureau, and by 51 other Non-aligned countries as Observers. The Ministerial level Meeting was immediately preceded by an Officials' meeting.

The Meeting was concerned with a wide ranging review of international affairs in both the political and economic fields, as well as with a review of the state of preparations for the forthcoming Havana Summit Meeting. Amongst international political issues considered were the Middle East question, regional pacts and arrangements, the problems of Southern Africa and issues underlying the Law of the Sea; matters of an economic interest which came under review included the outcome of the recent UNCTAD (V) Conference, the question of energy as it affects developing countries and the implementation of the Action Programme for Economic Co-Operation.

The Meeting concluded with the issue of a Final Communiqué covering these and other matters.

At a Press Conference following the closing of the Meeting, its Chairman, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister the Hon A C S Hameed, M.P., described it as "the most crucial and critical Conference that the Movement has faced in its lifetime". He believed that the most significant outcome of the Conference was that the members of the Movement had learnt and realised that while maintaining the consensus formula, active and aggressive consultations and negotiations were also absolutely necessary to keep the unity of the Movement. He added that there was no move at any time during the Colombo Meeting to change the consensus mechanism. The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister emphasised that the manner in which the Movement faced the challenges posed in Colombo gave everyone absolute confidence that it would be able now to continue in strength, facing even graver challenges in the future.

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Foreign aid for Sri Lanka

A Spokesman of the Finance and Planning Ministry in Colombo is reported in the local press as stating that the Aid Sri Lanka Consortium which met in Paris at the end of May had pledged an unprecedentedly large amount of Rs.11,110 million in aid to Sri Lanka, for the forthcoming year. This reflected the increasing confidence being reposed in the policies and programmes of the present Government of H.E. President J R Jayewardene.

The previous largest pledge made in this connection had been at last year's Aid Consortium Meeting, when the amount was Rs.6,000 million. Of the present pledges, Rs.4,410 million constitutes aid in support of the Mahaweli Development Project whilst the balance amount of Rs.6,700 million will be for other development programmes.

The Consortium Meeting was attended by 14 countries and 4 international agencies. Ten of the countries concerned are full donor members whilst the other four were attending as Observers. The aid pledged does not, in fact, include any firm commitment from the Governments of Britain and Canada, both of whose representatives stated that their respective new Administrations had still not arrived at firm decisions in that regard by the time of the Consortium Meeting.

Sri Lanka's delegation to the Consortium Meeting was led by the Hon Minister for Finance and Planning Mr Ronnie de Mel, who was accompanied there by the Hon Minister for Lands, Land Development and Mahaweli Development, Mr Gamini Dissanayake and a large team of Senior Officials.

CWC Leader on Tamil Issue

The Ceylon Workers Congress journal "Congress News" reports remarks made by the Hon S Thondaman, M.P., Minister for Rural Industrial Development in Sri Lanka and CWC Leader, during his visit to India.

Speaking on the Tamil issue, Mr Thondaman is reported as stating that: the present Government has solved the language problem to meet the aspirations of the Tamils. What is most heartening is that it is prepared to discuss various problems in order to solve them.

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The journal "Commerce", published in Bombay, has commented on Mr Thondaman's visit to India as follows :

"After 40 years of relentless political battle, Mr S Thondaman, Sri Lanka's Minister for Rural Industrial Development and leader of the 1.2 million plantation labour community of Indian origin (out of a total Island population of 14 million) has succeeded in paving the way for this exploited class to enter the mainstream of national life of Sri Lanka. For Mr Thondaman it is a lifelong dream come true, achieved during the 20-month rule of the present Executive President of Sri Lanka, Mr J.R. Jayewardene, through dialogue marked by firmness and constructive co-operation on the part of Mr Thondaman and far-sightedness and understanding on the part of Mr Jayewardene. Mr Thondaman is now on a month's official visit to India. The visit is an hour of glory for him, since his community, which came to Sri Lanka mainly from Tamil Nadu in the second half of the last century to work on coffee and, subsequently, tea plantations in the central high hills of Sri Lanka, can now live with dignity and honour as citizens with rights and privileges equal to other Sri Lankans."

The HINDU on Separatism

The following is the text of an editorial which appeared in "The Hindu" Madras, on Friday 13 July 1979.

"Task before TULF.

"The declaration of a State of Emergency in Jaffna, the capital of the Tamil-dominated Northern Province by the Sri Lanka Government is not a surprising development, viewed against the rising tempo of terrorist activities in the area. Only a few days ago, the "Liberation Tigers", a militant Tamil youth organization, gunned down an Inspector of Police in Jaffna and shot dead two other persons stated to be Police informers. In the large-scale violence let loose by that organisation, which supports the TULF in its demand for a separate State for the Tamils, more than 14 Police Officers have so far been killed.

"Does the TULF, which constitutes the largest Opposition Party in Parliament, now stand in danger of being banned because it is insistent on the creation of a Tamil Eelam? It has been the contention of the TULF leaders that the guarantees enshrined in the Constitution - the special status accorded to Tamil as a

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national language and its use as the language of administration in the Northern and Eastern provinces where they constitute a significant majority - remained unfulfilled in practice and it was this that made them step up their campaign for a separate State regardless of its ugly repercussion on the law and order situation. Despite its stout denial of any connection with "Tigers", the TULF is still the accused. A large number of organisations - religious, social and political - has been urging the banning of the TULF. President J R Jayewardene had only recently issued the caution that the cry for a separate State was bound to raise communal passions and in any case he would not allow the country to be divided. It must be clear to the TULF leaders - they are seasoned enough to understand - that if they are keen to have their problems peacefully and satisfactorily settled, they must try and win their points through friendly discussions with those in authority notwithstanding the delay in attaining the objectives that such a strategy might entail.

"Mr Amirthalingam, Leader of the TULF Opposition, has on the other hand been soliciting the help of 'outsiders' to promote his group's cause. It is just as well that the Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka, Mr Thomas Abraham, said the other day in no uncertain terms that "There is not and never has been any action or intention on the part of the Government of India to undermine or subvert in any way the sovereignty or the territorial integrity of the Island".

This should drive home to the TULF Leaders that they would get no support or help from India in the pursuit of this separatist movement. This is not to say that the Tamils have no serious problems confronting them: Grievances relating to employment opportunities and allegations of neglect are not all imaginary as indeed shown by the fact that the Sri Lanka Government has now agreed to evolve a scheme by which Tamils would be hired in public sector jobs in proportion to their size in the country. President Jayewardene has also shown his readiness to appoint a Parliamentary Committee on such problems of the minority community as needed to be resolved. The government's land colonisation schemes which have been viewed with great concern by the Tamils could be objectively studied by the proposed Parliamentary Committee. It is for both the non-Tamils of Sri Lanka and the TULF leaders jointly to take a new and realistic view of the whole situation. Extreme and reckless courses are not going to solve outstanding issues; a calm patient and amiable disposition on the part of all concerned will. "

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Sri Lankan Cricket Tour

During this period, the Sri Lankan Cricket Team continued and concluded its extensive tour in this country.

The primary objective, namely participation in the ICC Trophy tournament for Associate Members, was amply fulfilled when Sri Lanka won the trophy easily notwithstanding its initial deficit of four points through forfeiture of a game in the preliminary rounds by convincingly beating Denmark and Canada respectively in the Semi-Finals and Finals.

In the final Sri Lanka broke its own record, established in the semi-final against Denmark, for the highest innings total by any participating team.

Sri Lanka thus qualified to participate in the Trudential World Cup Tournament, being placed in a group comprising also the West Indies (holders of the trophy) New Zealand and India. Though failing to qualify for the finals, Sri Lanka ended its programme of matches being placed third out of four in its group. Having lost to New Zealand and seen its match with the West Indies completely washed out by rain, Sri Lanka concluded her world Cup participation with a convincing win over India. In doing so, she in fact fared better than both Australia and India as neither of the latter countries managed a win over another full member of the ICC.

Thereafter, the team proceeded to play 3-day games against some counties and other representative sides, remaining unbeaten throughout and scoring a convincing innings victory in two days over the current Oxford University Team.

The team evoked much favourable comment particularly in regard to its batting prowess. They were also highly praised for their positive and enthusiastic approach to their cricket and, in the final analysis, the tour was deemed by most observers to have been a significant success. The only disappointment, in fact, could be said to have been the rejection yet again by the ICC of Sri Lanka's application for full membership.

Several of the team's members are remaining in Britain to take up professional engagements with various League sides, whilst the rest return to Sri Lanka.

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During the three-month long tour, the team were hosted at numerous receptions, dinners and other social engagements by a wide range of individuals and Associations of Sri Lankans. In particular, the team were accorded a reception by HE The High Commissioner and Mrs N Vimalasena, and a lunch by the Co-Ordinating Committee of Sri Lankan Associations in Britain. On the latter occasion, both the Nava Lanka Social Committee and the United Sri Lankans in the UK presented the team collectively and individually with several awards for their performances. The latter Association had as already mentioned in the Newsletter for May, accorded the Team a Reception on their first arrival, at the beginning of that month.

Sri Lankan Associations : Office Bearers

The Association of Ceylonese in UK at 28, Ewelme Road, London SE23 have intirated the following names of current office bearers and Committee members.

President	-	Mr Derrick Samarawickrama
Vice Presidents	-	Mr Paul David Mrs Flo Jayatilleke Mrs Ruki Mendis
Hon. Secretary	-	Mr Basil Perera
Hon. Treasurer	-	Mrs Nirmalee Anthony
Public Relations Officer	-	Mr Bandula Rajarathara
Committee Members	-	Mr Ben Fernando Mr Charles Perera Mr Victor Kasinathan Mr P Selvarajah Mr Paul Rodrigo Miss Phylis Bandaratileke Mr Vilath Additiya Mrs Lakshmi Samarawickrama Miss Charmaine Jayatilleke Mr Harry Seevaratnan Mr Spencer Anthony Mr F J Silva Mr Sarath Jayasinghe Mr Kingsley Fernando Dr Anton Fernando Mr Victor Livera

Vihara Building Fund - An Appeal

The Maha Bodhi Society of Sri Lanka has issued the following appeal for funds in support of the London Buddhist Vihara's endeavours to obtain bigger and better premises for itself here.

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APPEAL
MAHA BODHI SOCIETY
OF
SRI LANKA
LONDON BUDDHIST
VIHARA

"Proclaim, - O monks, the Dhamma glorious, preach ye a life of holiness, perfect and pure. "

Founded by The Anagarika Dharmapala in 1926, this Society completes 53 years of useful, dedicated service in Europe this year. The time has arrived to expand the present Vihara by purchasing a suitable property in London, with more accommodation and space.

In recent years under the guidance of Ven. Dr Hammalawa Saddhatissa Nayake Thera, Head of the London Buddhist Vihara, a wide programme of activities, which includes Buddhist practices, Dharmadesena, Educational and Cultural activities of Sri Lanka, was carried out. Thousands have benefited in the past, and Thousands will in the future.

We require £300,000/=(approximately 9 million rupees) immediately to assist in the purchasing of a suitable property in London.

We appeal to all Wellwishes to contribute freely and generously towards this worthy cause. Please fill in the following Pro-Forma and send it to us, with your donation made in favour of the "London Buddhist Vihara Fund" and the envelope addressed to the Secretary, Maha Bodhi Society, 5 Heathfield Gardens, London W 4.

PRO-FORM TO BE COMPLETED AND RETURNED

Full Name :

Address & Telephone No:

Amount Donated or pledged

No: of cheque/M.O./P.O. :

Cash donations accepted at Mahabodhi Society
Office, 5 Heathfield Gardens, London W 4

Signature:

Date:
